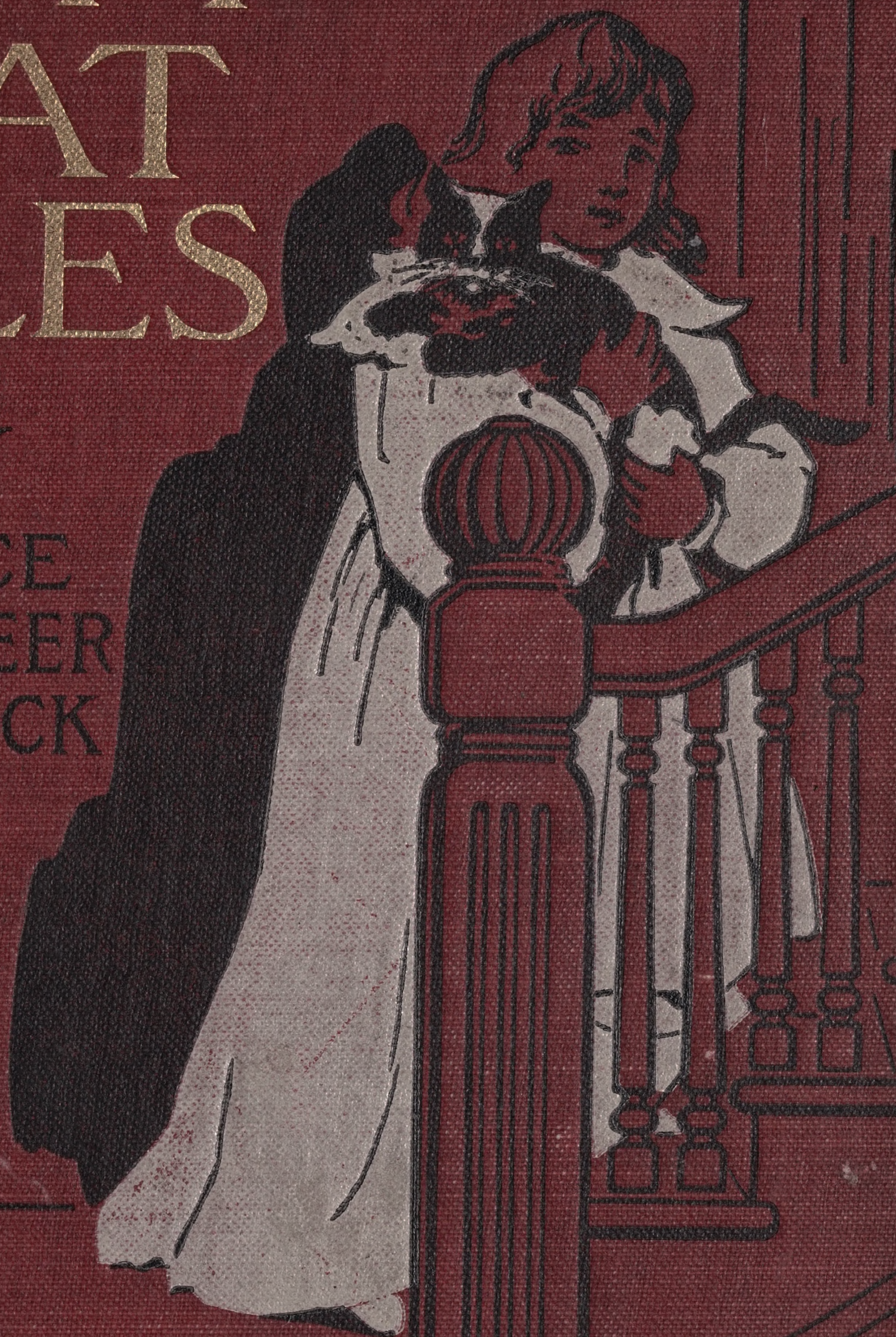


KITTY- CAT TALES

BY
ALICE
VAN LEER
CARRICK





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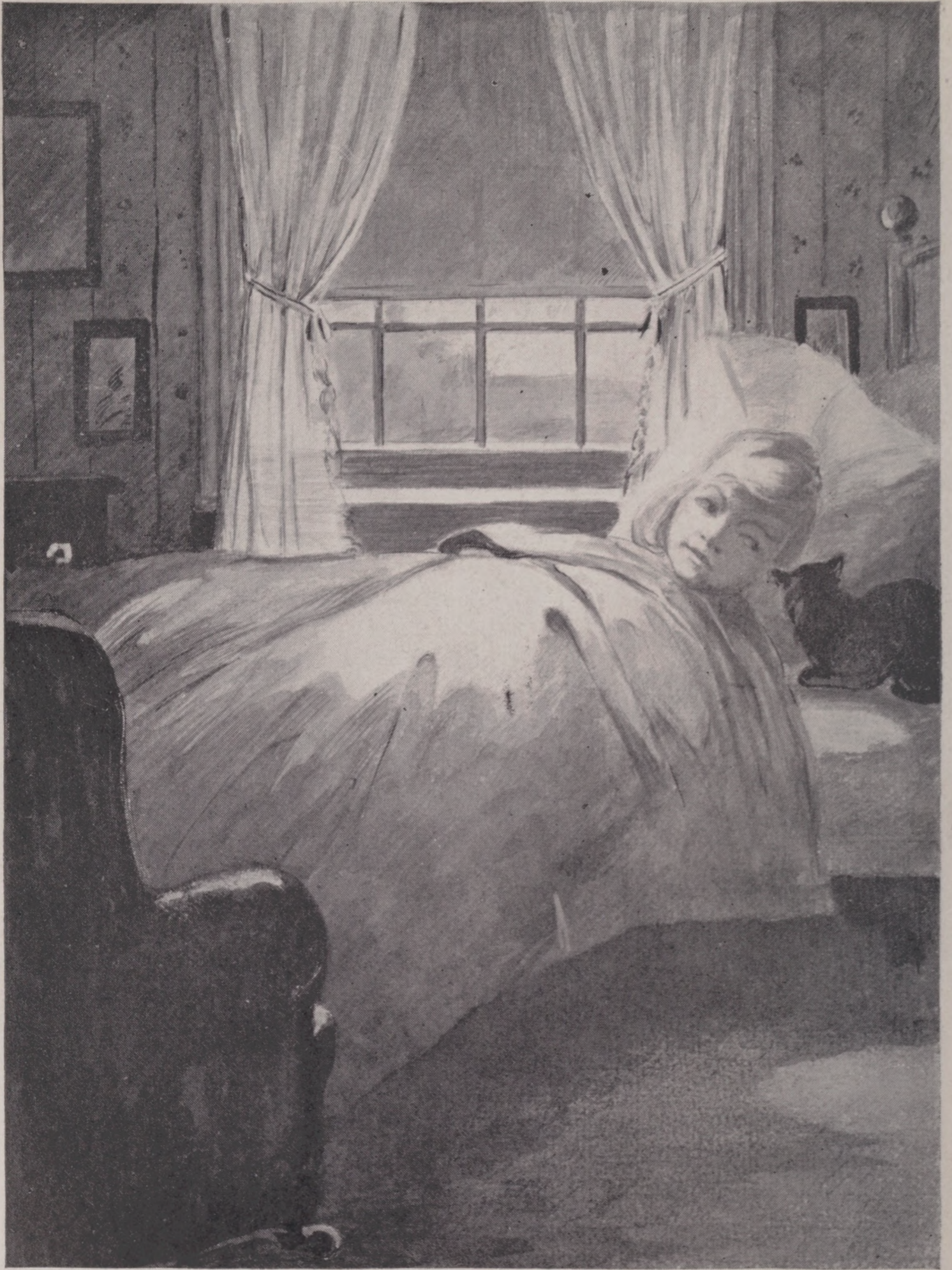
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KITTY-CAT TALES.





IMPTY CURLED HIMSELF UP CLOSE TO THE PILLOW, AND BEGAN
THE STORY. — *Page 12.*

KITTY-CAT TALES

BY

ALICE VAN LEER CARRICK

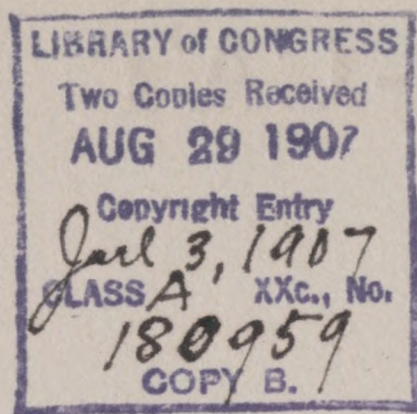
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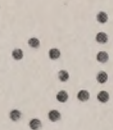


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KITTY-CAT TALES.



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To

MARGARET AND JOHN

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THE FIRST NIGHT

DOLLY sat up in bed, and stared gravely at the shutters where the last sunset light was trying to slip through. She was not at all sleepy, and, because Sandman had not come to shake his magic dust in her eyes, she had time to think what a lonely and very, very unhappy child she was. For Dolly's mother and father had gone away suddenly to her grandmother, who was ill, and Miss Jane had come to take care

of the little girl until they came home. Miss Jane was good to her — Dolly knew that — but, then, Miss Jane had never had any little girls of her own, so she could not know how nice a lump of sugar felt in your hand at bedtime, nor how a tight, lumpy braid of hair could get down your back at night, and keep you awake for ever so long. Miss Jane had given Dolly a drink of water, and heard her say her prayers, and then gone out.

“She never kissed me good night, nor told me just even one story,”

the little girl said to herself. "And she wouldn't shut the door loose, though I said 'Please,' 'cause she was afraid Impty would get in. O dear! How I wish I did have him with me!"

Now Impty was a black, black kitten, with long, thin legs, and a thin, curved tail that made him look like a witch's cat—ready to jump on a broom-stick, and sail off through the air—and he stared solemnly out of such round, yellow eyes that he seemed to understand everything that happened about him.

“Dear me! I wish Impty *was* here!” said Dolly again, and then something rubbed against her sleeve, and said, “Purr-rr-rr,” a long purr that slid at last into words, and sounded like this, “Purr-rr-rr, poor Dolly, poor Dolly! *I’ll* tell you a story.”

“Why, Impty, dear, I didn’t know you could talk,” the little girl cried.

“You never asked me,” answered the kitten, demurely. “But I *can* talk, and I can tell stories, too, for I know all the lore of Cat-Land. When I sleep I go there in my

dreams, and my grandfather, the King of the Cats, purrs the Kitty-Cat tales in my ear. You have been so kind to us all your life that you are loved through the whole Cat Kingdom, and so, one tale each night until your mother comes home, I am permitted by the King to tell you. But now lie down, and I will purr to you, and then, if Miss Jane comes in, she can't do more than say 'Scat' and drive me away, but if she heard me really talking, goodness knows what *would* happen !”

So Dolly cuddled down with a

happy little sigh, and Impty curled himself up close to the pillow, and began the story of "The White Cat."



Once upon a time there was a King who had three sons, all of whom were so handsome and good and clever, that he could not decide which should be the one to reign after him when he was dead and gone. Now this King was getting old, and as he knew that he must soon make his choice, and appoint

his heir, he called his three sons to him.

“Listen,” he said to them: “I am growing older every day, and soon one of you must rule the kingdom in my stead. Now, I love you all so well that I can make no choice, but I will give each of you the chance to win the crown. Gather together your servants and your horses, set out upon a journey, and the one of you who shall bring me back the most beautiful little dog, shall inherit my sceptre. One year will I give you for the search, and then I will make my decision.”

So the three sons took leave of their father, and started in different ways, sad at heart at leaving home and each other, for, though they were rivals, they were devoted brothers. One went north, and one went south, and both saw many strange sights, but the youngest Prince had the most wonderful adventures of all. He wandered here and there, buying dogs of all kinds: dachshunds, spaniels, black and tans, until he had a large pack of tiny dogs trotting at his heels.

Then, when the year was all gone but a month, and he was thinking

of turning his steps homeward, he wandered from his followers, and lost his way in a wide, dark forest. After calling out and hallooing in vain, he noticed a number of lights burning brightly not very far away, and he turned his steps in their direction. What was his surprise to come to the gate-ways of a mighty castle, brilliantly lighted, but with no warders at the doors. Instead of men-at-arms, a number of white hands appeared in answer to his knock, and ushered him into a spacious, well-lighted hall. He sat down in a soft arm-chair that the

hands had brought up close to the fire, and, when he was warmed and rested, the hands drew off gently his travel-stained garments, and dressed him in a magnificent suit of scarlet satin laced with silver. Then, when he was ready, and looking as a Prince should look, the hands led him into the banqueting-hall, and there, under a canopy at one end of the room, he saw the most beautiful cat he had ever beheld in his life. She was as white as snow, with long, soft, silky fur, and the prettiest little face imaginable. Below her were seated cats

playing on harps and lutes, and all about the hall hurried other cats busy on some errand.

His chair was placed beside the White Cat's; every honor was shown him, and, because he could not eat the mice and rats that were served up in all sorts of ways, the hands brought him his favorite dishes. While they were thus feasting, the Prince happened to look at a bracelet that the Cat was wearing. What was his surprise to see that it was a band of gold that held a miniature of himself! He was lost in wonderment, as well he might

have been, for he was sure that never in his life had he given his picture to a cat of any kind. But when he asked her about it, she only smiled sadly, and shook her head, refusing to say anything.

After the banquet was over, as he was very tired from tramping all day long, the hands led him to his chamber, and helped him to bed. The next morning he was awakened by the baying of hounds, and the cries of huntsmen under his windows. Jumping up, he quickly looked out, and saw the whole court ready to set out to the forest. When the

hands had dressed him in a suit of Lincoln green, he joined the White Cat, who was waiting for him to come and ride by her side to the hunt. She was mounted on a monkey, and the hands led out a wooden horse for the Prince to ride. At first he was inclined to be angry at being given such a clumsy steed, but the White Cat begged him so gently to try it, that he mounted the hobby-horse, and found that he had never ridden better in his life.

And so, day after day, the Prince spent his time at the



THE PRINCE MOUNTED THE HOBBY-HORSE, AND FOUND THAT HE
HAD NEVER RIDDEN BETTER. — *Page 20.*

Castle of the White Cat: feasting, dancing, hunting, and so quickly did the time go by, that he forgot that his year was nearly spent. He had told the White Cat of his quest, and how he hoped to be able to take back to the King, his father, the most beautiful little dog in the world. But so happy was he that he had forgotten all about it, nor would he have remembered it at all if the Cat had not called him to her, and said, "Prince, to-morrow you must leave me, and go back to your own world."

The Prince was heart-broken to think how he had forgotten his promise to his father, but the White Cat told him not to grieve, and placed in his hand an acorn, bidding him hold it to his ear. The Prince did so, and it seemed to him that he heard the bark of a tiny dog.

“Do not open the acorn until you reach the court of the King, and I promise you that all will be well,” she said.

So the Prince bade good-by to the White Cat sadly enough, and set out on his homeward journey,

riding his awkward hobby-horse, and in far less time than he had taken to come, he was back again at the Palace. His brothers had arrived before him, and, as he entered the hall, they were showing off proudly their delicate, highly bred dogs. But when the youngest Prince opened the acorn and displayed his beautiful little dog, all black, resting against a white satin cushion, the whole Court cried out in admiration that the Kingdom must surely be given to him.

The old King was a little un-

willing, however, to give up ruling yet, and the two other brothers begged so hard to have another chance that it was finally decided that the Princes should again set out on their travels; and that, this time, the one who should bring home the finest piece of linen, long enough to make the king a robe, and delicate enough to pass through the eye of a needle, should have the Kingdom as his reward. A second time the three Princes started out, but now the youngest Prince refused to allow his retinue to accompany him.

Instead, he mounted his old hobby-horse, and rode away to the White Cat's Castle. When he reached the gate, the whole Court of Cats ran to welcome him. The White Cat received him as graciously as before, and when the Prince told her the search he had again been sent upon, she smiled, and promised that she would set her cleverest spinners at work. There, for another year, the Prince stayed, and the time went as swiftly as happiness always does, and he was amazed when the White Cat called him to her, and told him that he must go

that very night if he wished to reach his father's court in time for the test. Then she put into his hand a walnut, bidding him keep it carefully until he should reach the King's Palace.

Just as before, he arrived as his brothers, believing that he would not come in time, were opening out their webs of linen. Very fine they were. The web that the eldest brother had brought would slip with ease through a bodkin; the second son's piece could be drawn through the eye of a large darning needle; but the

whole Court, remembering what the youngest Prince had already done, waited to see what he had to show. He took the walnut from his pocket and cracked it. Inside was a hazel-nut. This he cracked, too, and, what was his surprise to find a cherry-stone!

When he had broken this in halves he saw inside a grain of wheat, and in the grain of wheat a millet seed. And then the Prince lost heart, and thought that the friend he had so believed in had played him some cruel trick. But as this idea passed through

his mind he felt a soft scratch on his hand to let him know that the White Cat was true. So he opened the millet seed, and drew forth the finest web of linen in the world. At the least it was four hundred ells long, and so delicate that it would slip with ease through the eye of the smallest needle that could be found.

All the courtiers cried aloud together that the youngest Prince had once more won the Kingdom, but the elder brothers begged for a third chance, and as

the old King was still unwilling to give up his throne, he decided that his three sons should again set out, and that the one who brought home the most beautiful maiden should marry her, and that as King and Queen they should rule together over his Kingdom.

For the last time the Princes started forth on their quest. The elder brothers took their own roads, but the youngest, mounting his old wooden horse, rode straight to the Castle of the White Cat. She was as happy

as ever to see him, and soothed away his disappointment, promising him all the help in her power. Just as before, the days sped away in merry-making, and when the year rolled round again, the White Cat told the Prince that now the time had come when he was to carry back to his father's Palace the most beautiful girl in the world.

“But where shall I find her?” cried the Prince, in despair. “I have delayed too long in your castle, and now I shall never rule over my father's Kingdom.”

“Yes, you shall,” replied the White Cat. “If you will do as I bid you, you shall have the most beautiful Princess in the world for your bride. Take your sword, cut off my head and tail, and fling me into the fire that burns in the great hall.”

The Prince angrily refused to do anything so base.

“What! After all your kindness would you have me treat you as your worst enemy might? No, I would far rather never be King than buy my inheritance at such a price,” he said.

But the White Cat begged so, telling him, with tears in her eyes, that it was the greatest favor in the world that could be done her, that, at last, the Prince consented.

He drew his sword, cut off her head and tail, and flung her into the fire. In her stead rose up, to his great wonderment, the most beautiful girl he had ever seen.

She stretched out her hands to him.

“Oh, you have saved me from a horrible enchantment, dear Prince,” she cried. “If you had

not done as I asked, all my life long I should have remained a cat. I was changed into that shape, and condemned to stay so until my death, or until the enchantment should be broken, because I displeased the fairies who brought me up. They declared that I must marry the hideous little King of the Dwarfs, and when I refused, and showed them your picture, telling them that you were the only man that I would ever wed, they threw this spell over me. And now, if you love me as I do you, and wish to

marry me, take me to your father's Palace, and the Kingdom shall be yours."

The Prince, who all this time had been falling deeper and deeper in love, helped her mount her horse, and followed by her attendants — who were cats no longer, but men and women like themselves — the Prince and the beautiful Princess rode back to his home.

The brides of the elder brothers were beautiful to see; the Court could not decide which was the lovelier, but when the

youngest Prince entered the hall, every courtier declared that he had again been successful.

The old King rose from his throne.

“My son,” he said, “the Princess you have brought home is the loveliest lady that these old eyes have ever seen, and though my Kingdom is all unworthy her rule, it is yours; fairly have you won it.”

But the Princess knelt down beside him, and said:—

“We will not take your crown from you, for I am Queen of

five mighty Kingdoms. Therefore you shall keep yours, and one each will I give to your elder sons, while my husband and I will reign over the other three."

So every one was contented, and as for the Prince and his beautiful Princess, none ever ruled more wisely, nor were more beloved by their subjects than they were.

"And so they lived happy for ever and ever afterwards," murmured Dolly, contentedly. "All

nice fairy tales end that way, Impty."

But Impty only yawned, and arched his back lazily. Then he jumped down from the bed.

"I am going to Cat-Land now," he said, "to get you a story for to-morrow night. And I am going to sleep under the big arm-chair, near the door, so that I can slip out when Miss Jane comes in at seven o'clock. If she sees me, you know she might lock me up in the shed to-morrow night, and then, what *would* we do?"

And, in another minute, the little

lonely child — not lonely any more,
but very happy — and the black,
black kitten were fast asleep.

THE SECOND NIGHT

MISS JANE must have been astonished at the willing way Dolly went to bed the next night. There never was a child more ready to be undressed; and although Miss Jane braided her hair in a tighter, lumpier braid than ever, Dolly never said a word. There was no need for the child to sit up in bed and stare at the light slanting through the shutters, as she thought how far away her mother was. In-

stead, she cuddled into her pillow contentedly, and as soon as Miss Jane was safely downstairs, Impty jumped up, and curled himself into a soft, black ball beside her.

“To-night,” he began, “to-night I am going to tell you the tale of ‘The King of the Field-Mice.’”

THE KING

OF

THE

FIELD

MICE



There was, once upon a time, long, long ago in Japan, a very poor man, a gardener named Chúgoro Yamakawa, who, with his wife, Ino-yo San, lived in a little cottage on a small plot of ground. All that they had to eat they raised in their garden, and their clothes were bought by the money that the old

man made in selling his vegetables and fruits from door to door. Their only treasure was their cat Tamá, a large, sleek fellow, and the finest mouser in the whole neighborhood. Every day, when Chúgoro went to work in his garden, Tamá trotted after him, and rubbed up against him, as if to say, "My dear Master! How I wish that I could help you!"

Well, one day, as Chúgoro was digging around his young bamboo trees, Tamá came bounding through the grass with something in his mouth. The old man looked

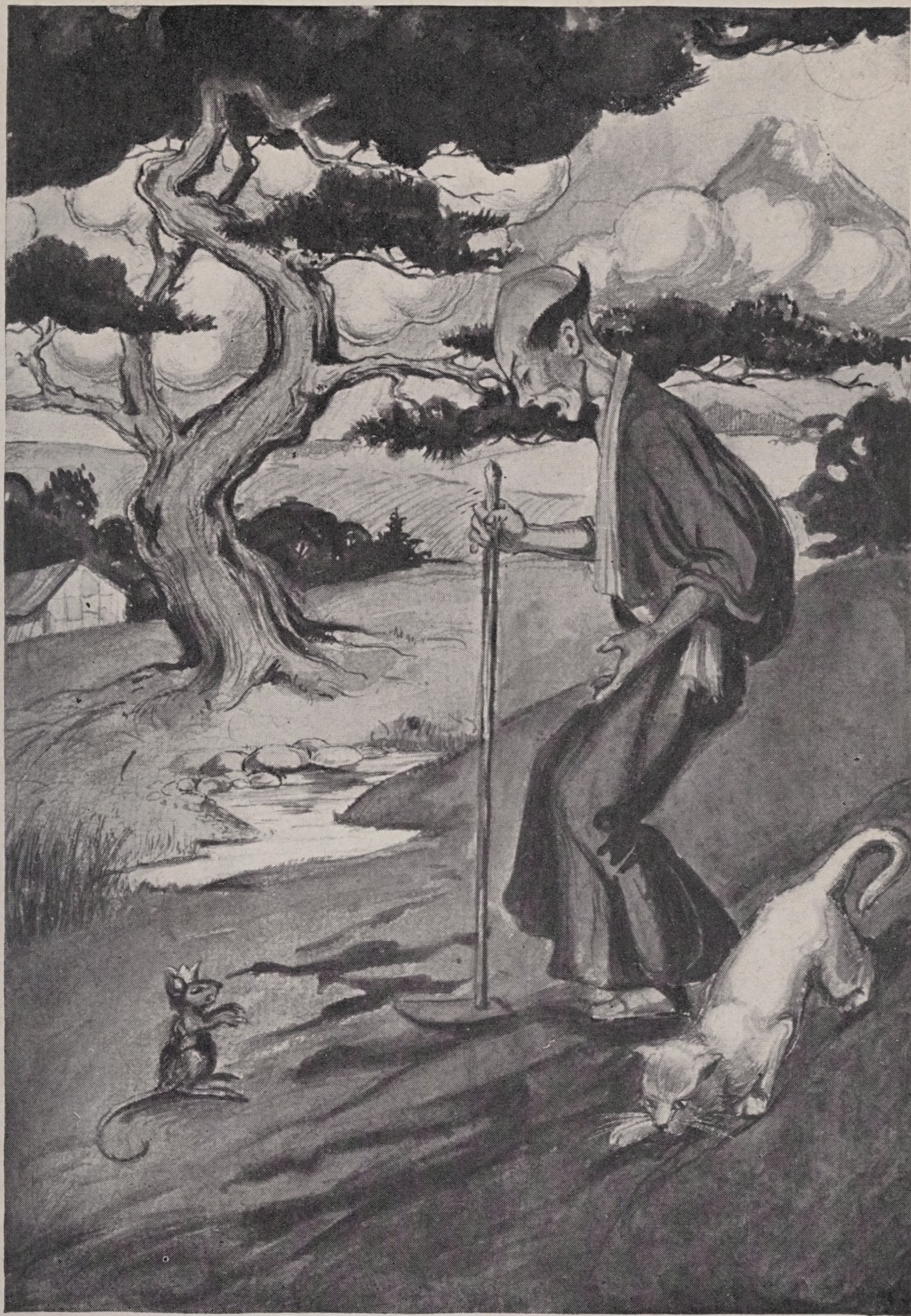
down, and saw that it was a pretty little field-mouse, and, as he was a very kind-hearted man, he took it away from the cat, who seemed perfectly contented, and trotted off as if his business was done.

The field-mouse was not dead, only frightened, and as soon as Chúgoro put it down on the ground again, instead of running away, it sat up on its hind legs, and said in the tiniest, clear voice: "I owe you many thanks, Chúgoro Yamakawa, for saving my life. Know, then, that I am the King of all the Field-Mice, and, if you will meet me to-

night at the door of my Palace, I will bestow great riches upon you."

The old gardener thanked the little King, and promised to meet him that evening as soon as his work was done. So, after sunset, leaving Tamá with Ino-yo San, he walked through the garden until he reached the hole where the mouse was waiting for him.

"But I cannot enter here," said Chúgoro, looking at the little hole. "Oh, yes you can," answered the King, "for I will touch you with my paw, and then you will grow



“KNOW, THEN, THAT I AM THE KING OF ALL THE FIELD-MICE.”

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small like me, and able to enter my dwelling."

He stretched out his paw, and immediately the old man shrank and shrank until he was no larger than the King of the Field-Mice himself.

They walked together down a narrow passage-way which, after a little, widened into a beautiful hall, all glittering with gold and silver. In the middle was a table richly spread with "o-tsu-yu" and salad and raw fish, all in gorgeous lacquered bowls, with plenty of "saki" to wash the

viands down. There Chúgoro sat and feasted with the King and the Queen and the whole Royal Court, and, as they ate, from the kitchens came the small song of the servant mice, pounding rice for the New Year. As they pounded, they sang this strange little ditty:—

Ton, ton! Neko sai oraneba
Nezumi no yo zakare. Ton, ton!

(When the cat's away
The mice will play!)

After the King saw that Chúgoro could eat no more, he led him to the treasure chamber,

and filled his arms with gold and silver and fine lacquer work; enough to make him a rich man for life. Then he led him through the winding passage, and bade him good-by. When the old man was out in the fields again, he found that he was the same height that he had always been, and he hurried home to share the good news with Ino-yo San and Tamá.

With his riches he built himself a fine new house, and bought jewels and silk robes for his wife, and, as for Tamá, he

rested at night on a downy cushion, and lived on everything nice that a cat could wish.

Now, a rich, miserly neighbor of Chúgoro's, Gizæmon Muratani by name, seeing the gardener so rich and prosperous where he had always been in want before, called upon him, and begged to know what had brought him such wealth.

Chúgoro, who was very generous, and who wished all the world to be as fortunate as himself, told the whole story to Gizæmon. Immediately the miser

asked that Tamá should be lent to him, that he might once more catch the King of the Field-Mice. The gardener willingly agreed, and Gizæmon took Tamá, and started across the fields, with the cat trotting at his heels. All of a sudden, Tamá darted swiftly away, and came bounding back over the grass with something in his mouth. It was the King of the Field-Mice again! Gizæmon set him free, and—for he was very ungrateful—drove Tamá harshly away. The mouse thanked the rich man as he had Chúgoro,

and, in the same way, begged him to come that night to the door of his Palace. The miser's heart swelled with pride and vanity.

"Now," thought he, "I will be richer than my neighbor, for all that the Field-Mouse gives me, and all that I have myself, will be mine."

He could hardly wait for the sun to set, he was so anxious to gather up his riches.

The King met him at the doorway, and touched him with his paw. Like Chúgoro, he grew smaller and smaller until he could

follow the King down the little winding passage. When the banquet hall was reached, he was seated at the King's right hand, and served with all sorts of delicious food; but the greedy man looked around instead of eating, and, as he saw how many fine things there were in the room, and, as he heard the little kitchen mice singing away, as they pounded:—

Ton, ton! Neko sai oraneba,

Nezumi no yo zakare. Ton, ton!

he thought, "What a fine thing it would be for me if I could make

these mice believe that a Cat *was* here! Then they would run away, and all these riches would be mine!”

So he called out in a loud voice, “Miaou! Miaou! Miaou!” and the little, frightened mice fled away in a tremble. Gizæmon was beginning to gather up the gold and silver dishes, when, all at once, he found he was growing taller and taller and taller. He ran to the door, but he was much too large to get out. He dropped all his stolen riches, but he kept on growing bigger and

bigger and bigger until he grew right up in the field like a potato, and a farmer who was digging there cracked his head with a hoe.

And so his greediness and ingratitude were rewarded, but as for Chúgoro Yamakawa and his wife Ino-yo San, they lived with Tamá, their cat, happy for ever and ever afterwards, as you say.

“But I *do* think,” Impty added, as he jumped down from the bed, and went to hide under the arm-chair, “I *do really*

think that Tamá was a wonderful cat not to have eaten the field-mouse that last time. I'm afraid *I* should."

THE THIRD NIGHT

IMPTY came dancing out of his hiding-place as soon as the sound of Miss Jane's footsteps died away on the stair.

“‘Pussy Cat, Pussy Cat, where have you been?’” cried the little girl gayly.

“Well, I haven't been *quite* to London to look at the Queen,” answered Impty, as he pranced across to Dolly's pillow, and curled down beside her. “But

I've been somewhere that's very nearly as good, for I've visited the Court of the Countess von Rustenfustenmustencrustenberg, and heard there the story of 'The Discontented Cat,' and I'm going to tell you to-night the tale of her adventures, and how she was taught to be happy instead of being always dissatisfied."



DISCONTENTED CAT

Once upon a time — I can't say exactly when it was — there stood a neat, tidy little hut on the borders of a wild forest. A poor old woman dwelt in this hut. She lived on the whole pretty comfortably; for though she was poor, she was able to keep a few goats, that supplied her with milk,

and a flock of chickens, that gave her fresh eggs every morning; and then she had a small garden, which she cultivated with her own hands, and that supplied her with cabbages and other vegetables, besides gooseberries and apples for dumplings. Her goats browsed upon the short grass just outside the garden, and her chickens ran about everywhere, and picked up everything they could find. There were some fine old trees which defended the cottage on three sides from the cold winds, and the front was to

the south, so it was very snug and sheltered. The forest afforded her sticks and young logs for fuel, so that she was never in want of a fire; and, altogether, she managed to make out a pretty comfortable life of it, as times went.

The only friend and companion the old woman had was her gray cat. Now, the cat was a middle-aged cat: she had arrived at a time of life when people grow reflective; and she sat by the hearth and reflected very often. What did she reflect about? That is rather

a long story. You must know, then, that a few leagues from the old woman's hut, at the other end of the forest, there rose a grand castle, belonging to a very great baron. And sometimes, on fine summer mornings, as the old woman and the cat were sitting in the sunshine, by the door, the old woman at her spinning-wheel, and puss curled up for a nap after her breakfast, the forest would suddenly ring with the sound of hunting-horns, shouts, and laughter; and a train of gay ladies and richly dressed gentle-

men would sweep by on horseback, with hawk and hound, and followed by servants in splendid liveries ; for the Baron was fond of hawking and hunting, and frequently took those diversions in the neighboring forests. Now, it so happened that in one of the tall trees behind the cottage there lived a magpie, not by any means an ordinary magpie, but a bird that had seen a good deal of the world ; indeed, at one time of her life, she had, as she took care to inform everybody, lived in the service of the Countess von Rus-

tenfustenmustencrustenberg. How she happened to leave such a grand situation, the magpie never explained: to be sure, some ill-natured people did say that there had been an awkward story about the loss of one of the Countess's diamond bracelets, which was found one fine morning in the inside of a hollow tree in the garden; and that Mag was turned away in disgrace directly. But how the matter really was I cannot say; all I know is, that she took up her abode halfway up one of the large oaks, behind

the old woman's hut, a long time before our story begins; and that, being of a particularly sociable and chatty disposition, she soon established an ardent friendship with the cat, and they became the greatest cronies in the world. So when, as I said just now, the Baron's grand hunting parties swept past, they afforded the magpie a fine opportunity for displaying her knowledge of life and the world. And sometimes, too, she would dwell at great length on the splendor and happiness she had enjoyed while she lived with

the Countess in her Palace, till the cat's fur almost stood on end to hear the wonders she related. What a place that Palace must have been! Very different, indeed, from the old woman's cottage.

Now these conversations with the magpie sadly unsettled the mind of the cat; more particularly when the magpie related to her how daintily the Countess von Rustenfustenmustencrustenberg's cat always lived, — what nice bits of chicken she dined upon, what delicious morsels of buttered crumpet

she often had for breakfast, what soft cushions she lay upon, and a great deal more to the same purpose : all of which made a powerful impression upon our wondering friend. So she sat and reflected by the fire, while the good old woman, her mistress, went on spinning the wool which she sold afterwards at the nearest town, to buy food and clothes.

The more the cat talked to the magpie, the more dissatisfied she became with her present condition ; till, at last, I am sadly afraid that when, in a morning, the old woman

gave her her breakfast of goats' milk with some nice brown bread broken into it, she began rather to despise it, instead of taking it thankfully, as she ought to have done, for she was very comfortably off in the cottage—having bread and milk every morning and night, and something for dinner, too; besides what mice she could catch, to say nothing of a stray sparrow or squirrel now and then. But, as I said just now, the magpie's chattering stories unsettled her; she thought it would be so charming to dine upon bits of roast chicken,

and have buttered crumpets for breakfast, and fine cushions to lie upon, like the Countess's cat. All this was very silly, no doubt; but she wanted experience: she knew nothing of the thousands and thousands of poor cats who would have thought her life quite luxurious. It is a very bad thing to get unsettled; it sets people wishing and doing many foolish things.

One fine bright evening the magpie was perched upon the projecting bough of her oak, and the cat, who thought the cottage particularly

dull that day, had come out for a little gossip.

“Good evening!” screamed the magpie, as soon as she saw her; “do come up here and let us chat a little.” So the cat climbed up, and seated herself on another bough a little below.

“You look out of spirits to-day,” began the magpie, bending down a very inquisitive eye to her friend’s face. “I am afraid you are not well. But I am not surprised. That old sparrow I saw you eating for dinner must have been as tough as leather. It’s no wonder you are

ill after it! You should really be more careful, and only catch the nice tender young ones."

"Thank you," replied the cat, in a rather melancholy tone, "I am perfectly well."

"Then what in the world ails you, my dear friend?"

"I don't know," answered the cat, "but I believe I am getting rather tired of staying here all my life."

"Ah!" exclaimed the magpie, "I know what that is — I feel for you, Puss; you may well be moped, living in that stupid cottage all day.

You are not like myself, now; *I* have had such advantages! I declare to you I can amuse myself the whole day with the recollection of the wonderful things I have seen when I lived in the great world."

"There it is," interrupted the cat. "To think of the difference in people's situations! Just compare my condition in this wretched hole of a hut, with the life you say the Countess's cat lives. I'm sure I can hardly eat my sop in the morning for thinking of her buttered crumpets. It's a fine thing to be born in a Palace!"

“Indeed,” replied the magpie, “there is a great deal of truth in what you say; and sometimes I half repent of having retired from her service myself; but there’s a great charm in liberty—it is pleasant to feel able to fly about wherever one likes, and have no impertinent questions asked.”

“Does the Countess’s cat ever do any work?” inquired puss.

“Not a bit,” answered the magpie. “I don’t suppose she ever caught a mouse in her life. Why should she? She has plenty to eat

and drink, and nothing to do but to sleep or play all day long."

"What a life!" cried the cat. "And here am I, obliged to take the trouble to catch birds or anything I can, if I want to make out my dinner. What a world it is!"

"Your most obedient servant, ladies," just at that moment hooted an old owl from a neighboring fir-tree. "A fine evening to you!"

"Dear me, Mr. Owl! How you made me jump!" cried the magpie, quite crossly, "I nearly tumbled down from the bough!"

To tell the truth, the magpie did not particularly care for the owl's company. He was apt to say very rude things sometimes; besides, he was thought a very sensible bird, and Mag always declared she hated sensible birds — they were so dreadfully dull, and thought themselves so much wiser than other people.

But the cat was not sorry to have a chance to tell her woes to any one who was so generally respected for his wisdom, and she said at once : —

“ We were talking, my dear sir,

on the wide differences there are in the world."

"You may well say that," answered the owl, giving a blink with his left eye. "I suppose," he added, turning to the magpie, "that your ladyship finds a good deal of difference between your present abode and the Countess's grand palace garden. I only wonder how you could bring yourself to make such a change—at your time of life, too."

"What a very rude speech," thought the magpie; she fidgeted upon the branch, drew herself up,

and muttered something about people minding their own business.

“But you, my dear cat,” went on the owl, “you have every reason to be satisfied with your lot in life.”

“I am not so sure of that,” said the cat. “I think I have a good many reasons for being quite the contrary; the Countess’s cat has cream and buttered crumpets for breakfast, and sleeps on a beautiful soft cushion all night, and all day, too, if she likes it; and just look what a dull life of it I lead here! And I have nothing but the hearth to lie upon, and noth-

ing for breakfast but milk and brown bread!"

"And you ought to be thankful you can get that," cried the owl, quite angrily. "I can tell you what, Mrs. Puss, I have seen more of the world than you have, and I just say this for your comfort—if you could see how some poor cats live, you would be glad enough of your present condition."

"Humph!" muttered the cat, "I really don't see how *you* have contrived to see so much of the world, sitting as you do in a tree all day. I should think that the magpie

ought to know something of life, after the high society she has lived in; and I *do* say it's a shame that one cat should have buttered crumpets and cream for breakfast, just because she happens to live in a palace, while another has only brown sop, because she happens to live in a cottage!"

"But suppose," replied the owl, "that some other cat, who lives in a cellar, and never gets anything to eat, except what she can pick up in the gutters, should take it into her head to say, 'What a shame it is that some cats should have nice,

snug cottages over their heads, and warm hearths to sit by, and bread and milk for breakfast, while I am obliged to live in this horrid, cold cellar, and never know how to get a mouthful?"

But the cat could not believe him.

"My dear Mr. Owl," she said, "you can't really mean that there are any such poor cats in the world. I am sure that the magpie, with all her experience of life, would have told me about it, if it were really so. You must be mistaken."

The magpie was, by this time,

very tired of such a long silence, and she broke in with : —

“ You will excuse me, my worthy friend, but really you do sit there so, day after day, blinking in the sun, without a soul to speak to, that I don't wonder at your taking very strange fancies into your head. I can only say that, during the whole of my residence in the Palace of the Countess von Rustenfustenmusten-crustenberg, my late respected mistress, I never came in contact with any cat in the condition you are pleased to mention, and *I* should know something of the world, I think.”

“Well,” said the owl quietly, “I will not dispute your ladyship’s knowledge of the world, but I strongly advise our friend, Mrs. Puss, to remain contented at home, and not try to improve her fortune by going into the town. People should learn to know when they are well off.”

Just then, patter, patter, patter, came a few large drops through the leaves; the magpie, making a prodigious chattering, and declaring that a tremendous storm was coming on, flew down from the bough; and whispering to the

cat not to mind what the owl said, — “a stupid old bird,” — she hid herself, very snugly, in a hollow place in the trunk — not at all sorry, to tell the truth, to end the conversation. The owl nestled himself in a thick bush of ivy that grew near, and the cat ran into the cottage, to sit by the fire and reflect, for between her two friends her mind was a little puzzled.

The old woman shut the cottage door, heaped some dry fir logs on the fire, and sat down to her spinning-wheel. The rain pelted

against the shutters, the wind howled in the tree tops, and roared loudly in the forest behind the hut; it was a terrible night out of doors, but within the cottage it was snug enough; the fire was blazing merrily, the old woman's wheel turned briskly round, the kettle was singing a low, quiet song to itself beside the crackling logs, and the cat was sitting on the hearth looking warm and comfortable. But she was not at all comfortable in her mind, for discontented people seldom are. It never entered her

head to consider whether there were any poor cats abroad that night, without a shelter over them. In fact, she could think of nothing just at this time but the luxuries enjoyed by the fortunate cats who might happen to be born in grand palaces: so, curled up in the warmest corner of the hearth, she sat watching the little spouts of flame that kept flashing up from the pine logs, and wishing for the hundredth time that day, that she had had the good luck to be a palace cat. Presently a very strange thing happened.

All of a sudden, she felt something very lightly touch her coat, and looking round, there stood, close by her, the most beautiful little thing that anybody ever dreamt of. She was not many inches high, her robe seemed made of gold and silver threads fine as gossamer, woven together. On her head she wore a circlet of diamonds, so small and bright that they looked like sparks of fire, and in her tiny hand she bore a long and very slight silver wand.

The cat looked at her with

astonishment; it was very odd that the old woman did not seem to see her at all.

The beautiful little lady looked at the cat for a minute or two very steadily; and then said, "You are wishing for something; what is it?"

By this time the cat had recovered from her fright, and was able to speak, so she answered, "Please your Majesty, whoever you are, you have guessed right for once — I *am* wishing for something. I wish to live in the Palace of the magpie's grand Countess!"

Wonderful to relate — the words were no sooner spoken than the fairy struck her wand upon the floor three times, and lo! and behold! instantly there appeared a car made of four large scallop-shells joined together, and lined with rich velvet; the wheels were studded with the whitest pearls, and it was drawn by eight silver pheasants. The fairy seated herself inside, and told the cat to step in after her. Puss obeyed, and in an instant the hut, the old woman, and the little garden, all had vanished, and she and the

fairy were sailing through the air as fast as the eight pheasants could fly.

“Where in the world are we going, please your Majesty?” said poor puss in a dreadfully frightened tone, clinging to the sides of the car with her claws, so that she might not be tossed out. “Hush!” said the fairy, in a voice so solemn that the cat did not venture to ask another question.

On, on, on they flew, and the wild heath swelled into mountains, and sank again into plain and valley; and they heard be-

neath them, like the distant sea, the rustling of the wind among the clumps of pine trees. On, on, the birds flew, till at length there appeared far below them, the glimmering lights and dim outlines of a stately city. On, on, the birds flew, and the city grew nearer and nearer; turrets and spires and ancient gables rose in the bright moonlight, and the houses grew thicker and thicker together.

At length the pheasants flew more slowly, and the cat saw that they were approaching a mar-

vellous building. How her heart beat, partly with fright, partly with the rapid motion, partly with hope. Yes, they were really drawing near a magnificent Palace. It had high towers and carved gateways, that threw strange deep shadows upon the walls, and the panes of the lattices glittered like diamonds in the moonbeams, and smoke from the chimneys curled up into the cat's face, and got down her throat, and made her sneeze dreadfully — she wondered how the fairy could bear it. But now, slowly, slowly, slowly, the

magic car began to descend, till it was just on a level with one of the windows, which happened, very conveniently, to have been left wide open; so in flew the pheasants, car and all, and alighted on the hearth-rug. "Jump out; be quick!" cried the fairy. The cat did not wait to be told twice—she was out in a twinkling; but before she could turn her head round, car, fairy, and pheasants had vanished, and she was left alone in the strange room. And what a room it was! It was so large that three or four huts like her

old mistress's would have stood in it. The floor was covered with something so thick, so warm, and so beautiful, all over flowers in bright colors, that she had never seen anything like it before: in short, everything in the room was so fine or so soft or so large or so bright, that the cat could not conceive what such strange things could be meant for.

However, she soon decided that the hearth-rug was the most delightful bed she had ever rested upon; and stretching out her limbs upon it, before the huge

fire that was burning in the grate, she tried to collect her scattered ideas before she went any farther in these unknown regions. Suddenly the door opened.

“Dear me! What a pretty cat!” cried a waiting-maid, entering the room, “and just when we are wanting another, too. My lady, the Countess, will be quite pleased.” Then, coming up to the cat, she took her in her arms, and began stroking her most affectionately. “Pretty Pussy! How did you ever get into the room? Oh, I see! They left

the window open, and so you wandered in out of the street, poor little cat. It's really quite lucky, just as the old one is dead." So saying, she again stroked the cat, and carried her away into the inner room, where there sat an old lady in an easy chair by the fire eating her supper.

"Please, your ladyship," said the waiting-woman, "here's a poor cat come into the house to-night, just as we were wanting one — will your ladyship be pleased to let it remain here?"

“To be sure,” said the old Countess von Rustenfustenmusten-crustenberg, — for it was she, — “it has come just in time to supply the place of poor old Finette. Put it into Finette’s bed to-night, Ermengarde, and give it a good meal first, for I dare say it is hungry enough, poor creature. Bring it here to me, and let me stroke it.”

You may imagine how puss purred her very loudest as the Countess patted her, and called her a pretty cat. She thought herself now the luckiest cat in the world.

How she wished that spiteful old owl could but know about it. Ermengarde now took her back into the first room she had entered, and setting her down on the hearth-rug, went out. Presently she returned, and placed before the cat a dish that held such a supper as she had never dreamed of. However, she did full justice to it in time; and then, after some more patting and petting, the maid again took her up, and placed her by the side of the fire in a very pretty basket lined with soft cushions.

The next morning the cat was awake early; the sun was shining through the satin curtains of the splendid room, and everything in it looked so *very* beautiful! How different from the old woman's hut! So the cat sat up in the basket, and looked about her. After she had amused herself in this way for some time, Ermen-garde opened the door.

"Well, Pussy," she said, "so you are wide awake, and ready, I dare say, for your breakfast."

Now for the buttered crumpets! thought the cat. The maid went

out, and quickly brought back a large saucer of rich milk, with some roll crumbled into it. No buttered crumpets!

Puss was really disappointed. It was certainly very strange, but perhaps she should have some another morning. However, she made a very good breakfast, but she was a little cross all day. Soon after breakfast the Countess came in, followed by a lapdog — a fat, spoilt, disagreeable-looking animal — and the cat took a dislike to him at first sight. And as for the dog, he almost growled out loud when the

Countess stooped down to stroke the cat.

“Now, Viper,” said the old lady, “be good! You know you are my own darling, that you are; but you must not quarrel with poor pussy. No fighting, you know, Viper!”

Whereupon Viper struggled down out of his mistress's arms, for she had taken him up to kiss him, and giving a short snarl, he mounted upon a stool before the fire, and sat eying his new acquaintance with such a fierce look that the poor cat really shook all over, and wished herself safe out of



THE COUNTESS CAME IN, FOLLOWED BY A LAPDOG.— *Page 97.*

the Palace again. However, whenever the Countess left the room, she always called Viper away, too; so they were not left together at all the first day. After a little the cat began to get used to Viper's cross looks, and did not mind him a great deal: and the old lady petted and made so much of her, that she thought no cat had ever been so fortunate before.

One day Viper was to dine with the cat, and Ermengarde brought in two plates this time, and to work they fell with all their might. Viper had eaten up

nearly all his own dinner, and the cat was saving a beautiful *merry-thought* for her last titbit when, as ill luck would have it, the Countess was suddenly called out of the room.

Instantly, with a growl that sounded like thunder in the cat's ears, Viper darted right at the *merrythought*, crying:—

“You vile little wretch of a stray cat, do you suppose I shall allow you to come in here and rob me of my bones?”

“Indeed, my lord,” said the cat, very much frightened, “I did not

mean to take more than my share !”

“And pray, madam,” screamed Viper, “what do you mean by that? Do you think that I have taken more than mine? Now, Mrs. Puss, just listen to me, once for all : if you give me any more of your impertinence, I’ll worry you to death in two minutes !”

Poor puss! She trembled so from head to tail that she could hardly stand, but just as she was going to beg him not to be angry, the Countess came in again, and took Viper for his afternoon ride.

Poor puss! She was very sad all evening, and she wished many times that she had never left her mistress's cottage. True, she had cream for breakfast and chicken for dinner, but what was that worth, if every mouthful she ate she feared that Viper would snatch from her?

Fifty times did she wish herself a hundred leagues off! How careful she resolved to be to do nothing that could possibly offend the dog. And so, for the next three or four days, by dint of giving up to him all her best bones, and always

jumping up from her cushion whenever he wanted to lie upon it, she managed to get on in halfway peace with his lordship. But unluckily, one morning, puss, finding herself all alone in the drawing-room, and feeling very sleepy — she had not rested for nights from very fear — thought she might as well take the chance of getting a nap. Jumping upon a high footstool near the fire, she was soon asleep. How long she had napped she could not tell, when she was awakened by a furious barking, and, opening her eyes, she saw

Viper standing at a little distance, looking as if he were going into fits with rage.

Poor puss! She recollected all in a moment that she had got upon Viper's own footstool! She jumped down before you could count one!

"You audacious little upstart!" cried the dog, as soon as he could speak from wrath. "Do you think I shall submit to such liberties?"

"Indeed, I humbly beg your lordship's pardon," stammered the poor cat, "but I really quite forgot —"

“Forgot, indeed!” roared Viper, “I’ll teach you to forget, Mrs. Puss!” and making a tremendous dash at her, he would have finished her in no time, had not, fortunately, the window been open a little — just enough for the cat to get through.

She was on the window-seat in an instant, and had scrambled out of the window before Viper, who was very fat, could come up to her. It was with some difficulty that he got upon the window-seat, and quite in vain that he tried to squeeze his fat body through the opening of

the window. How he growled with disappointed rage, as he stood on his hind legs on the window-seat, stretching his head, as far as his little short neck would allow, through the opening, to see what had become of puss.

What *had* become of her? She had dropped down into the street, and had crept into the shade of one of the heavy broad-stone carvings beneath the window, and there she lay, panting with fright, to get her breath a little, and think what was to be done. To go back to the Palace was out of the ques-

tion. But then, where could she go? Poor cat! What a muddle she was in! She lay snug for the best part of an hour before she dared venture out of her hiding-place. At last, peeping all about her, she crept out and ran, with all her speed, down the street, not knowing in the least where she was flying. She had not gone far before some ragamuffins caught sight of her. Shouting, whooping, laughing, they chased her. She ran faster and faster, and darting suddenly down an alley, was soon out of sight of her pursuers. She

heard their screams and yellings growing fainter and fainter in the distance, and feeling that the immediate danger was past, she stopped to look, and see where she was. She found that she was in a little, dirty, miserable court, open at one end, through which she saw trees and green fields. So she ran on, and, in a short time, she found that she had left the town behind her, and was once more in the open country. At last she came to a small clump of trees which put her in mind of the forest near her old mistress's hut. She climbed up in

the largest one, knowing that she would be safe from dogs there at least, and finding a snug place among the branches in the middle of the tree,—for though it was autumn, yet the leaves were still pretty thick,—she made up her mind to pass the night there.

But what was she to do for supper? Her squabble with Viper had taken place before dinner, and now there was no chance of anything but what she could get herself. Perhaps she might, with good luck, catch a bird before night, but that could not take the

place of the nice bits of fowl and saucers of rich milk that Ermen-garde gave her every night. However, she was too glad to be safe and snug up in the tree to be very fussy. So she made up her mind to lie there till it grew towards roosting time, and then see what she could find for supper. At last nightfall came, and the birds flew back to their nests. In a few minutes she caught a robin, but that was all she had that night, and weary and hungry the cat climbed back in the tree again, and was soon asleep. When she woke, she

was still hungry, and she ached in every bone. So three or four days passed, until poor puss began to think she would never be able to find her way back to her old home in the forest, and, at last, quite ready to die of cold and hunger, she stretched herself out on a thick bed of leaves, and cried, "Oh, that I had never listened to that deceitful, mischievous magpie!"

It was drawing towards sunset; there had been several storms during the day, but, as the evening came on, the weather had cleared up a little, and a gleam of sun-

shine just then shot out from among the black clouds, and fell upon something glittering beside her.

She lifted her eyes slowly, for she had no strength to be alert now, and saw the bright and beautiful fairy, with her car drawn by the silver pheasants.

“Have you learnt yet to be contented with plain fare at home?” asked the fairy.

“Oh, if you would only take me back to my old mistress,” cried the poor cat, “I should never, never be discontented again!”

The fairy smiled, and touching her lightly with her silver wand, bade her close her eyes — another moment, and she bade her open them: and — most wonderful of all wonderful things that had happened to her — the trees, the country, the distant city, all were gone! There was a fine log-fire on the hearth, sparkling and crackling; whirr, whirr, whirr, went the old woman's wheel, and there she sat in her chair just as usual. The wind was blowing and the rain was pelting against the shutters, exactly as it had done the night

puss left the cottage in such a strange way. In fact, everything looked entirely the same. The cat rubbed her eyes, but nothing could she see of the fairy, or the car, or the silver pheasants.

How had she got back, and so quick, too? And the old woman did not seem at all surprised to see her. It was very odd! She could not make it out, anyhow; and at last it struck her that perhaps she might have been dreaming, and never been out of the hut at all. Yet those terrible growls of Viper's, and those dis-

mal nights and days in the trees!
No, they must have been real!

But her puzzling was broken into by the cheerful voice of her old mistress, calling out, "Come, my pussy! It is supper-time!" As she spoke, she rose from her spinning-wheel, and taking down some eggs and a cake of brown bread, with a large jug from her corner cupboard, she broke the eggs into the frying-pan, and they were soon hissing and sputtering over the fire. Then she placed a large saucer on the table, and broke some bread into it; and,

turning to the fire, she took off the frying-pan, and emptied the eggs into a dish on the table, and sat down to her supper. But before she tasted a bit herself, she poured some nice goat's milk over the bread, and set it down on the hearth before the cat.

Now I will venture to say puss never before in her life ate a meal so thankfully. She made a resolution after every mouthful never to say one word to that silly, chattering magpie again; and never to wish any more foolish wishes, but to stay at home, do

her duty in catching her mistress's mice, and be contented and thankful for the brown bread and milk, without troubling her head about countesses and buttered crumpets any more.

She kept her word. She never spoke to the magpie afterwards, but was a steady friend of the owl until the day of his death; and when he did die, which was not until he was very old, he left to her, in his will, his share of the mice that lived in the neighborhood of the cottage.

As to the magpie, finding that

her company was no longer wanted in that part of the world, she very wisely took her flight far away to the other side of the wood.

Whether she still lives there, and goes on chattering about the grand things she used to see in the Palace of the Countess von Rustenfustenmustencrustenberg, is more than I can tell you. If you want to find out, you must go to the northern part of the Duchy of Kittencorkenstringen; and then you must walk seventeen leagues and three-quarters still

farther north ; and then you must turn off to your right, just where you see the old fir-stump with the rook's nest in it ; and then you must walk eleven leagues and a quarter more, and then turn to your left, and after you have kept on for about fifteen leagues more, you will see the wood where the magpie lives ; and then if you walk quite through it to the other side, you will see the old woman's cottage ; and, if it should happen to be a fine day, I dare say you will see her sitting in the sunshine spinning, and, curled

round beside her, the Contented Cat.

“What a nice story, Impty,” said Dolly, as the black kitten purred out the last word. “And don’t you just love that old owl?”

“I always *did* like owls myself,” Impty answered. “They seem so much more like cats than birds. Their feathers are so thick they look like fur, and then, owls see in the dark as well as cats do, and they eat mice, and are really *most* respectable. But good night, now,” he added, jumping down from the

bed, "we've had such a long story-time this evening, that I must go to sleep at once, if I am to have another tale ready for you to-morrow."

THE FOURTH NIGHT

“WE sat up so disgracefully late last night,” began Impty, yawning, “that I’m sleepy yet. *I* had to go to Cat-Land, you know, and although that’s very pleasant, still, it isn’t much of a rest.”

“What are you going to tell me to-night?” Dolly asked, as she made a place on the pillow for the black kitten.

“To-night it’s going to be a shorter story,” Impty replied. “They call it, in Cat-Land, ‘The Cat Who Married a Mouse.’”

THE CAT WHO MARRIED A MOUSE



Once upon a time, a cat and a mouse made friends, and at last they grew to love each other very much, for the mouse was a clever little thing, and puss was as fine a cat as you could hope to see in a day's journey. So they decided to marry, and live always in the same house, and be very comfortable indeed.

One day, during the summer, the cat said to his wife, "My dear, we must take care to lay in a store for the winter, or we shall die with hunger; you, little Mousey, cannot venture to go about anywhere for fear you should be caught in a trap, but I had better go and see about it."

This good advice was followed, and in a few days Tom came safely back with a large jar full of beautiful meat covered with fat, which he had found. They had a long talk about a place in which to hide this treasure; but at last

Tom said: "I don't know a better place than the church. No one ever thinks of robbing a church; so if we place the jar under the altar, and take care not to touch it, then we shall have plenty to eat in the winter."

The jar was carried to church, and put in a place of safety, but the meat did not stay there long.

Tom kept thinking of what was in the jar, and longing so much for a taste, that at last he made an excuse to get away from home.

"Mousey," he said, one day, "I have had an invitation from one

of my cousins to be present at the christening of her little son who was born a few weeks ago. He is a beautiful kitten, she tells me, — gray, with black stripes, — and my cousin wishes me to be godfather.”

“Oh, yes! Go, by all means,” replied the mouse. “But when you are enjoying yourself, think of me, and bring me a drop of the sweet, red wine if you can.” Tom promised to do as she asked him, and went off as if he were going to see his cousin. But after all it was not true. Tom had no

cousin, nor had he been asked to be godfather.

No, he went right off to the church, and slipped under the table where the jar of meat stood, and sat looking at it. He did not look for long, however, for presently he went close up and began licking and licking the fat on the top of the jar, till it was nearly all gone. Then he took a walk on the roofs of the houses in the town, and finally stretched himself out in the sun, and stroked his whiskers as often as he thought of the delicious feast

he had just had. As soon as the evening closed in, he returned home.

"Oh! Here you are again," said the mouse. "Have you spent a pleasant day?"

"Yes, indeed," he replied. "Everything passed off very well."

"And what name did they give the young kitten?" she asked.

"Top-off," said Tom, quite coolly.

"Top-off!" cried the mouse. "That is a curious and uncommon name! Is it a family name?"

“It is a very old name in our family,” replied the cat. “And it’s not worse than Thieves, as your ancestors were called.”

Poor little mousey made no reply, and for a while nothing more was said about Tom’s cousins.

But Tom could not forget the jar of meat in the church, and the thought of it made him long so much that he was obliged to make up another tale of a christening. So he told the little mouse, that a lady-cat, his aunt, had invited him this time, and

that the kitten was a great beauty, all black, excepting a white ring around its neck, so he could not refuse to be present.

“For one day, dear Mousey, you will do me this kindness, and keep house at home alone?” he asked.

The good little mouse willingly agreed, and Tom ran off; but as soon as he reached the town, he jumped over the churchyard wall, and very quickly found his way to the place where the jar of meat was hidden. This time he feasted so greedily, that when he

had finished, the jar was more than half empty.

“It tastes as nice as it smells,” said the cat, after his joyful day’s work was over and he had taken a nice nap. But as soon as he returned home, the mouse asked what name had been given to the kitten this time.

Tom was a little puzzled to know what to say, but at last he replied: “Ah! I remember now. They named it Half-Gone.”

“Half-Gone! Why, Tom, what a queer name! I never heard of it before in my life, and I am

sure it cannot be found in the 'Register.'"

The cat did not answer, and for a time all went on as usual, till another longing fit made him rub his whiskers and think of the jar of meat. "Mousey," said he, one day, "of all good things there are always three; do you know I have had a third invitation to be godfather? And this time the little kitten is quite black, without a single white hair. Such a thing has not happened in our family for many years, so you will let me go, won't you?"

“Top-Off and Half-Gone are such curious names, Tom,” replied the mouse, “that they are enough to make one suspicious.”

“Oh, nonsense!” said the cat. “What can you know about names, staying here at home all day long in your gray coat and soft fur, with nothing to do but catch crickets? You can know very little of what men do in the world.”

Poor little mousey was silent, and she patiently remained at home during the absence of the greedy, deceitful cat, who, this

time, feasted himself till he had quite cleaned out the jar and left it empty.

“When all is gone, then one can rest,” said he to himself, as he returned home at night quite sleek and fat.

“Well, Tom,” said the mouse, as soon as she saw him, “and what is the name of this third child?”

“I hope you will be pleased at last,” he replied; “it is All-Gone.”

“All-Gone!” cried the mouse, “that is the most suspicious name yet; I can scarcely believe it.

What does it mean?" Then she shook her head, rolled herself up, and went to sleep.

After this Tom was not invited to any more christenings; but as the winter came on, and in the night no provisions could be found, the mouse thought of the careful store they had laid up, and said to the cat, "Come, Tom, let us fetch the jar of meat from the church; it will be such a nice relish for us."

"Ah, yes," he replied. "It will be a fine relish to you, I dare say, when you stretch out your little

tongue to taste it!" So he took himself out of the way, and mousey went to the church by herself. But what was her vexation at finding the jar still standing in the same place, but quite empty.

Then she returned home, and found Tom looking as if he did not care, although he was at first rather ashamed to face her.

"I understand now," said the little mouse, quite gently. "I can see what has happened. A fine friend you have been to deceive me in this manner! When you



"I UNDERSTAND NOW," SAID THE LITTLE MOUSE, QUITE GENTLY.

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told me you were going to stand godfather to the three little kittens, you never visited your relations at all; but, instead of that, you went to the church three times, and ate up all the meat in the jar. I know, now, what you meant by Top-Off, Half-Gone,—”

“Will you be quiet?” cried the cat, in a rage. “If you say another word, I will eat you.”

But the poor little mouse had got the name on the tip of her tongue when Tom interrupted her, and she could not stop herself. Out it came—“All-Gone!”

Tom, who only wanted an excuse to eat up his poor little wife, sprang upon her the minute she uttered the word, broke her back with his paw, and ate her up!

"Oh, Impty," cried Dolly, as the story ended, "what a wicked cat! I hope you would never, never do such a thing! You *wouldn't*, would you?"

"No," answered the kitten, yawning again, "I never should. In the first place, I'd not dream of marrying a mouse. *I* always eat 'em."

THE FIFTH NIGHT

“I’m a little late this evening,” purred Impty, as he rubbed up against Dolly the next night. “But the large yellow cat across the street is giving a Catnip Tea, and I simply *had* to stay for one cup.”

“I do hope that you’re going to tell me a pleasanter story this time,” said the little girl. “I dreamed all night long about that poor mouse.”

“To-night,” said the black kitten, “I am going to tell you of Mother

Michel, and the wonderful adventures of her cat, Moumouth. It is *very* exciting, and it turns out beautifully in the end."

Mother Michel And Her Cat



More than a hundred years ago there lived in Paris an old countess, Madame de la Grenouillère, a widow who had no children and who loved animals very dearly. But she was quite unfortunate, for none of her pets, no matter how much she loved or cared for them, ever lived. One

by one they died, and, at last, the Countess decided that she would have no more. However, one day, as she was riding home in her chariot, she saw a crowd of children tormenting a poor street-cat. They had tied a saucepan to its tail, and goodness knows what would have happened if Madame had not put her head out of the window and called to them that whoever should bring the cat to her would be rewarded with a piece of gold.

The crowd of children all ran after the cat, not to torment him

now, but to bring him safely to the rich lady and gain the reward; and he was nearly as much in danger from kindness as he had been from cruelty. At last he was caught, and brought safely to the Countess. Once she had him safe in the chariot, she took a good look at him, and then said: "Poor pussy! What a very ugly little cat you really are!" But when the cat turned to look reproachfully at her, she exclaimed: "Well, he may be ugly, but he certainly has very fine eyes. Here," she added, turning

to her companion, "once more I will have a pet. Let us take this poor pussy with us, and see what a comfortable, happy life at my fireside will do for him."

So saying, she placed him in the arms of her friend, Mother Michel, and together they all three rode home.

Besides her companion, there was another one of her household upon whom the Countess greatly relied, and this was her steward, whom the old lady had nicknamed Lustucru. Now Lustucru was as bad as Mother Michel was good ;

he hated all animals as much as the Countess and her companion loved them ; and, when he saw them bringing home another cat, he was very angry, although he pretended to be pleased, and called the cat “pretty puss” more than once. And this the cat seemed to know, for he walked away from Master Lustucru whenever he saw him coming.

At the end of four or five weeks you would never have known Moumouth. They had given him this name because, so an old scholar told the Countess,

that Moumouth, in Hebrew, meant "saved from the sauce-pans." And, in a second month, Moumouth had grown fat, and his fur shone as if it were satin.

But something, which always does turn up, even in the happiest cat's life, came to disturb Moumouth's peace of mind. Madame de la Grenouillière was called to Normandy by the sickness of her sister, and, alas, Moumouth could not go with her because the sick lady did not like cats.

"Come here, Mother Michel,"

said the Countess; "I am going to trust my precious cat to you. Take care of him well, and if, on my return, he is alive and thriving, I will leave you a pension of three hundred dollars a year."

"But, Madame," replied her companion, "I will take care of Moumouth because I love him as if he were my own."

"I know that," said the old Countess, "but be very, very careful, and I will reward your zeal."

When the steward heard this promise, he was wild with wrath. "Mother Michel will have

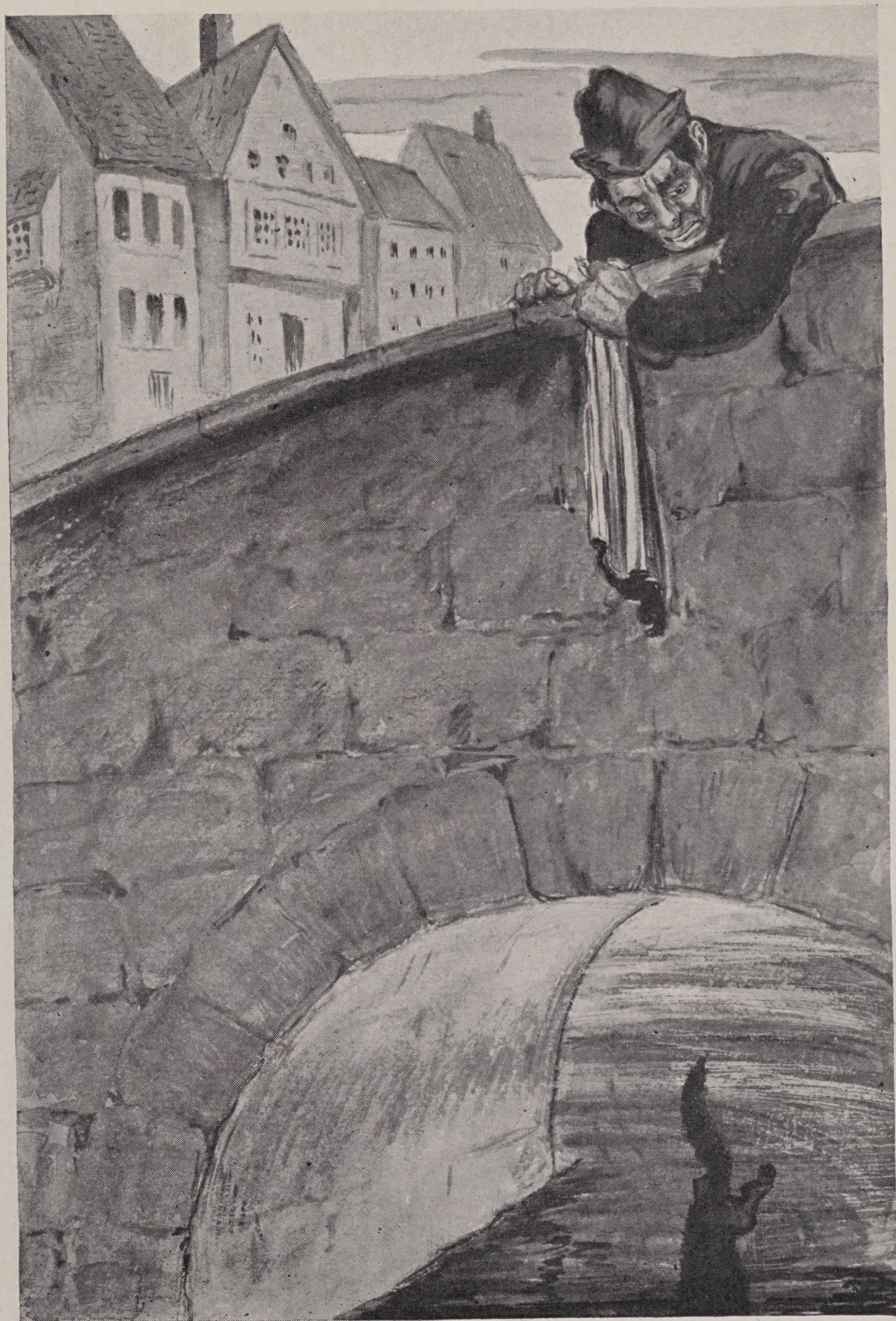
everything," he said, "and there will be nothing left for me. Well, Moumouth, once the Countess is out of the way, we'll see about your precious life."

The Countess set out on her journey, and Mother Michel, worthy of the confidence that had been shown her, now took the greatest care of Moumouth. She petted him, she patted him, and fed him so well that he grew even handsomer. All this time Lustucru was looking on, waiting for a chance to kill Moumouth when his faithful guardian should

not be on the watch. One evening, when the cat was asleep before the fire, Lustucru came to Mother Michel, and begged her to go down and see one of the servants who was very ill with rheumatism. As soon as she had left the room, he seized Moumouth, who had not even time to mew, and threw him head over heels into a large bag. Then the wicked man ran swiftly across the garden, and out into the street toward the Seine, and, the river once reached, he opened the bag and tossed Moumouth into the

water. He was in such haste to get home that he did not wait to see the poor cat struggling for his life in the river; nor did he see, a moment later, Moumouth crawling to a little ledge just at the foot of one of the arches of the bridge.

Instead, he ran home quickly, for fear Mother Michel would have finished her visit, and come to look for Moumouth. He slipped quietly into bed, and when, in a little while, she came and knocked at his door, he pretended to have just waked up from a sound sleep.



HE OPENED THE BAG, AND TOSSED MOUMOUTH INTO THE WATER.
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“Moumouth lost!” he cried, pretending to be very sorry indeed. “Oh, I’ll get up immediately and help you look for him. Such a fine fellow! It would be a thousand pities if anything happened to him.” And so, at the head of all the servants of the house, Lustucru helped Mother Michel search from garret to cellar.

But was Moumouth shivering all this time just above the cold waters of the Seine? Oh, no, although there for a number of hours he sat all huddled up, not daring to take his life in his paws and swim

to shore. But at daybreak, about five o'clock in the morning, two fishermen came to the bridge to try their luck. What good fortune for Moumouth! As soon as the lines were let down he seized them, and the fishermen, imagining from his weight that he must be some splendid fish, hauled him quickly in. But when, instead of a fish, a cat bounded off on the bridge, they stood in astonishment for a moment, and then ran after him as fast as they could. Moumouth redoubled his speed, and escaped his pursuers by jumping through the



VENUS TURNED HER AT ONCE INTO A CAT AGAIN. — *Page 180.*

open windows of a bakery. Here he found some bags of flour, and, tired out, he went to sleep at once. But he was so hungry that he soon woke up, and remembering his old habit of catching mice and rats when he was a gutter-cat, he sprang at the first mouse that popped its head out of a hole. Round and round the room he chased his prey, and the baker's boy, seeing the hunt, lifted a broom to hit him as he passed, but the baker forbade him to strike Moumouth. "He is a good mouser," he said; "he shall stay here and rid the bakery of

all the rats and mice that are eating us out of house and home."

When Moumouth heard these words he grew so frightened — believing that he would never see Mother Michel again — that he sprang through the nearest window, and so escaped into the street. Here he wandered among the back-alleys until nightfall, and then he scurried home as fast as he could scamper. He hid in the garret and timidly crept behind some boxes to wait until he should hear Mother Michel moving about downstairs the next morning.

All this time the household was searching still for Moumouth. The wicked Lustucru pretended to hear him crying in the garden; then, after they had vainly searched in every thicket and hedge, he would cry: "No. I'm sure that I heard him mewling in the cellar." At last, laughing to himself, he said, "Do you know, I think he must be in the garret." Up the long stairway Mother Michel ran, and who should come out and rub affectionately against her skirts but Moumouth!

Never was any one so glad to

see a cat before ; and Lustucru pretended to be as happy as the old lady herself. After this Mother Michel never let Moumouth go out of her sight ; she petted him nearly to death and made him sleep in her room. There was no chance for Lustucru to catch the cat alone again.

“ But he shall not escape me,” thought the wicked steward, and keeping this idea always in his mind, he bought a package of rat-poison, and, as he hid it safely away, he cried to himself, “ This ‘ Death to Rats ’ shall soon be

‘Death to Cats!’” The next day, when Mother Michel brought up Moumouth’s dinner,—good chicken patties,—Lustucru sprinkled poison all over them. Moumouth, hungry as he was, refused to eat, and Mother Michel, vexed at last with the whims of her charge, said: “Well! If you don’t eat those patties, Sir, you’ll get nothing else for dinner! Why, I’ve a good mind to eat them myself.”

“Oh, don’t!” cried Lustucru, jumping up in alarm. “A Christian should not eat food that’s been prepared for an animal.”

“Well,” replied Mother Michel, “either the cat eats those patties, or he goes hungry.”

And hungry poor Moumouth did go, all that day and all the next, living on scraps which the cook threw to him. But eat the poisoned food the clever cat would not. So the patties stayed locked up in Mother Michel's cupboard, and they were soon forgotten, except by Lustucru. He had failed so often to kill Moumouth himself, that he knew he must try some other means.

And Fate, which isn't always

kind to cats, threw just such a chance, he thought, in his way. One morning, as he was returning early from market, he saw a little ragged boy gazing hungrily at the open kitchen, and, no doubt, wishing himself well inside.

“What is your name?” asked Lustucru.

“Faribole, Monsieur,” answered the little boy, making a low bow.

“And what are you doing here, spying in my mistress’s windows? Are you thinking that you would like to be one of her household?”

“I was, indeed, Monsieur,” an-

swered Faribole. "Could you tell me if there is any need of a scullion, for I would willingly do any work, I am so hungry and homeless."

"I am the steward," said Monsieur Lustucru, proudly, "and I alone have the power to engage you. This I will do if you will promise to obey me in all things."

"Oh, I will do your bidding in everything," the little fellow pleaded.

"Then," said the steward, "follow me, and I will instruct you in your duties."

When they were safely in the house, Lustucru turned to Faribole and said, "Do you see that cat?"—pointing to the sleeping Moumouth. "You must try to make that creature your friend, for he is the chief pet of our mistress, Madame de la Grenouillère. Make him love you, make him your friend, and all will be well."

For a month Faribole played with Moumouth; he coaxed him, he petted him, and, at last, completely won the cat's heart. Moumouth would have followed him anywhere.

At the end of a month's time, Lustucru called the boy to him.

"You have done all I told you to," he said, as if he were very much pleased.

"And now shall I stay here always, Monsieur?" Faribole asked eagerly.

"That depends upon your being willing to do what I tell you, my lad," answered the steward. "You must, to-night, call Moumouth out into the garden. There you and I will put him into a large sack, and together we will beat him to death."

“Never! Never!” cried Faribole, who loved the cat very much. “I could never do such a dreadful thing as that!”

For answer Lustucru went to the closet where the boy's ragged garments, that he had worn upon first entering the house, were hanging.

“Take off the clothes I gave you, and go away instantly in these rags, if you are not willing to obey me!” said Lustucru, savagely.

In vain poor Faribole wept and begged for Moumouth's

life to be spared, but the wicked steward refused to listen to another word; and, at last, Faribole, growing less and less brave as he thought of his hungry days and wet nights on the pavements of Paris, promised that he would help Lustucru do this cruel deed.

The next day, as the afternoon was drawing to a close, Mother Michel called Faribole to her and said: "I am going out on an errand, now, and I am going to leave Moumouth with you. Be kind to him, and the Countess

will reward your kindness when she returns."

Alas! No sooner had she started than Faribole, the tears running down his face, coaxed Moumouth into the garden. There, at the end of a long alley, stood Lustucru waiting, sack in hand. He seized the cat, thrust him in the sack, and, in spite of all his struggles, tied the cord in a tight knot. He raised his club, and was about to strike when back came Mother Michel, out of breath from running so fast.

"Our dear mistress is return-

ing, Lustucru," she cried, panting. "Come, let us go to meet her with all the rest of the household."

She turned, and was soon out of sight.

"Here!" cried Lustucru, out of patience at the delay. "Here, Faribole! Take this wretched cat, beat him until he can't stir, and then throw him into the Seine." And he, too, ran away to welcome the Countess home again. When he returned, there was Faribole, his face all wet with tears, but no Moumouth!

“Have you done as I told you?” asked the wicked man, and the boy nodded his head, too sad to speak.

But here they heard the voice of Mother Michel calling Faribole.

“Faribole! Faribole! Come hither! Our mistress, the dear Countess, wishes you to bring her dear cat to her immediately.”

Faribole went slowly, and with his head hanging.

“Oh, Mother Michel!” he cried, “while Moumouth and I were at play in the garden, he

got frightened by some boys who were passing, and ran away to hide in the hedge."

The Countess was very much grieved, and Mother Michel tried to console her. "Once he was lost for several days, and he came back unharmed," she said.

But though they looked everywhere, and offered rewards, no Moumouth was to be found.

At last Mother Michel decided to go to the fortune-teller around the corner, hoping that there she might hear some news of her lost pet.

The fortune-teller turned over her pack of cards. "You are looking for something that is lost," she said. "Ah, I see by the cards that it is a cat." She turned over a few more, "My poor lady," she said sorrowfully, "your cat has been sold to a butcher, and eaten for a rabbit!"

Mother Michel was just beginning to wring her hands with grief, when she heard a violent scratching at the door, and then, right through a pane of glass bounded Moumouth, and jumped straight into her friendly lap.

“You wicked woman!” cried Mother Michel, angrily; “first you steal our cat, and then you pretend that he is dead. Oh, this is a fine tale to tell my mistress, the Countess. She’ll have you put in prison for this!”

“Mercy! Mercy!” begged the fortune-teller, falling on her knees. “I did not know the cat was yours. It was brought to me by a little lad named Faribole, who knew I wanted one. Forgive me! Do not have me punished for a thing that I did not know was wrong.”

Mother Michel was so happy

at finding Moumouth that she readily forgave the poor woman, and hurried home to show the dear pet to the Countess. Madame de la Grenouillère was as delighted to see Moumouth as her companion had been to find him. When they had petted him and fed him and, at last, left him asleep on a down cushion, they sent for Faribole, and asked him why he had done so wicked a thing.

“Oh,” cried the poor boy, “I wanted to save him from Monsieur Lustucru, and that seemed to be

the only way. He wanted me to beat him to death."

No one believed him, of course. The steward indignantly denied such intentions, and poor Faribole was sent away in disgrace.

But Lustucru's wickedness could not always remain hidden. Some days after Moumouth's return, while looking through her cupboard, Mother Michel found three dead rats and the remains of the chicken patties that Moumouth had refused to eat. She carried them to the Countess, and they sent for the steward.

“Oh, Lustucru,” said his mistress, “the rats are troubling me so in here that I wanted to know if you had any rat-poison.”

“Certainly, Madame,” he replied, bowing. “Wait one moment, and I will bring it to you.”

The Countess soon found that the two poisons were exactly the same, and, besides, there began to be people who said that they had seen Lustucru throw Moumouth from the bridge into the Seine. The steward, who feared that he would receive his just reward, ran away suddenly one night, and took

service shortly after on a ship that was wrecked on the Sandwich Islands. And so all his sins were punished, for it is said that the cannibals ate him for dinner the next day!

As for Faribole, he was taken again into the Countess's service, where, so willingly did he work, and so earnestly did he repent of his misdoing, that Mother Michel adopted him as her own son. When the old Countess died, she left in her will, as she had promised, an annuity of three hundred dollars to Moumouth and Mother

Michel, to be shared between them, and when one died, the other was to receive the whole legacy. So these three — Mother Michel, Moumouth, and Faribole — lived together happy and contented all their days. And when Moumouth died, — for all cats must, you know, — he had a grand funeral, and a fine monument with the story of his life written on it in Latin, so that all might know how good and wise a cat he had been.

“There!” purred Impty. “Isn’t that a fine tale? And, you see, it

did turn out well, didn't it? Why, Moumouth became so famous that people made a nursery rhyme out of his story. French children sing it to this day, and know it as well as you do 'Three Little Kittens.'"

"Oh, Impty! What lovely stories the King of the Cats does tell you! I wish I could go to Cat-Land some night. Couldn't I?" Dolly coaxed.

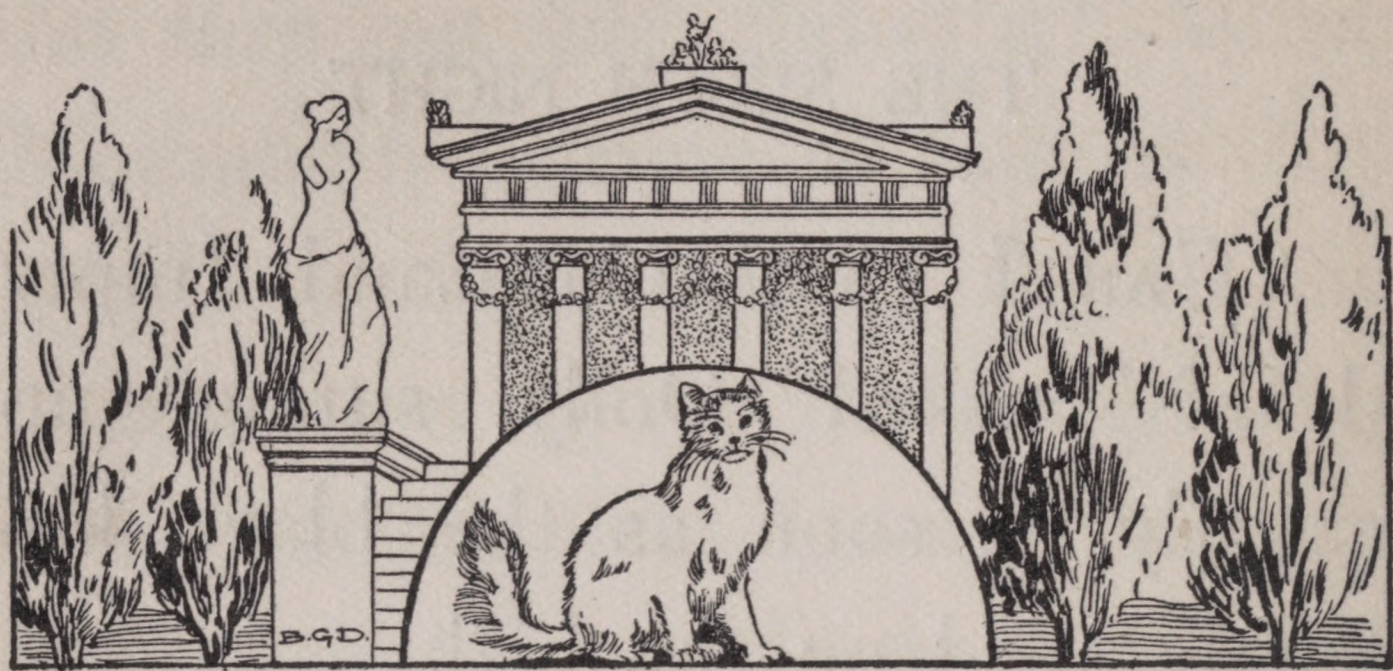
"I'll see," said Impty, settling himself for his sleep-journey. "To-night I'll ask my grandfather, and *maybe* he'll let you come."

THE SIXTH NIGHT

“CAN I go to Cat-Land, Impty dear?” asked Dolly, sitting up eagerly, as soon as the black kitten jumped on the bed.

“No, you can’t,” Impty answered. “I’m awfully sorry, but my grandfather says that unless you can change into a cat you can’t go; and people can’t change into cats, nor cats into people, nowadays. I can’t imagine wanting to be a human being, but there was a cat once that did. Did you ever hear of her?”

VENUS AND THE CAT



There was, once upon a time, a cat who was not at all satisfied with herself. It was not that she wished to be more beautiful, but, because she had fallen in love with a young man, she wanted to be changed into a girl, that he might love her in return. So she prayed before the altar of Venus, and

begged that the goddess would make her a beautiful maiden. So long and so earnestly did the cat pray, that Venus at last grew sorry for her, and changed her into one of the loveliest girls in the world, so beautiful, indeed, that, as soon as he saw her, the young man begged her to marry him. Everything was going as happily as possible, when Venus, just to see if she had been able to give the cat another nature in changing her shape, put a mouse down before her. Instantly the girl sprang from her seat, and chased the mouse

round and round the room, caught it, and would have eaten it, had not Venus turned her at once into a cat again, for she saw it was of no use, and that what was bred in the bone would always stick to the flesh.

“Of course it’s a pity she didn’t have more sense,” added Impty, sagely; “but then, mice are *such* a temptation! Æsop — my grandfather says he wrote the fable hundreds and hundreds of years ago — knew just as much about animals as he did about men. I’m going to tell you his story of ‘The Cat and the Fox.’”



One day a cat met a fox in the wood. “Ah,” she thought, “he is clever and sensible, and talked of in the world a good deal; I will speak to him.” So she said, quite in a friendly manner: “Good morning, dear Mr. Fox; how are you? And how do things go with you in these hard times?”

The fox, full of pride, looked at the cat from head to foot, and hardly knew what to say to her for a long time. At last he replied: "Oh, you poor little whisker-cleaner, you old gray tabby, you hungry mouse-hunter, what are you thinking about to come to me, and to stand there and ask me how I am getting on? What do you know, and how many tricks have you?"

"I only know one trick," answered the cat, meekly.

"And pray what is that?" he asked.

“Well,” she said, “if the hounds are behind me, I can spring up into a tree out of their way and save myself.”

“Is that all?” cried the fox. “Why, I am master of a hundred tricks, and have, over and above all, a sackful of cunning. But I pity you, Puss, so come with me, and I will teach you how to baffle both men and hounds.”

At this moment a hunter with four hounds was seen approaching. The cat sprang nimbly up a tree and seated herself on the highest branch, where, by the

spreading foliage, she was quite hidden.

“Turn out the sack, Master Fox, turn out the sack!” cried the cat; but the hounds had already seized him, and held him fast.

“Ah, Master Fox,” cried the cat, “your hundred tricks are not of much use to you. Now, if you had only known one like mine, you would not have lost your life so quickly.”

“And now I really must go,” said Impty. “I’m sorry not to

tell you more to-night, but our Caterwauling Class meets at eight in the backyard, and I'm leader. They say I've a wonderful voice for so young a cat. Isn't it lucky that the shutter doesn't close quite tight? If it did I'd never see the fence, nor my friends, either, and, just as likely as not, they'd elect Tabby Gray in my place out of spite. Good-by!"

THE SEVENTH NIGHT

OUTSIDE it was cold and wet; twilight had come early, and Impty trotted in shivering and a little cross.

“I almost wish that I wasn’t black,” he growled, as he cuddled up beside Dolly. “Miss Jane’s airing her furs; *she* says there’s frost in the air, and she picked me up just because she thought I was her old muff. The idea of mixing up a respectable kitten with a monkey muff!”

“What did you do, Impty?” asked Dolly, curiously.

“Oh, I just stuck out my claws, and miaoued a little. *Any* cat would, and then she said, ‘There’s that everlasting kitten!’ and shooed me out of the door, and I got all wet before I could run in again.”

“Poor kitty!” said the little girl, patting him.

“To-night is Hallowe’en,” went on Impty, “and people used to believe that witches and cats could go where they pleased on that night. They can’t, really.

I wish they could, for then I'd sail off through the air with Miss Jane's furs, and never, never bring them back! Or, perhaps, I'd bite her boa in two like 'The Cat and the Pudding-Bag String.' But it does seem a little odd that, long, long years ago on this very Eve of All Hallows, Dick Whittington heard the Bow Bells calling to him, 'Turn, turn again, Whittington, thrice Lord Mayor of London!' Do you know the tale of Dick Whittington and his wonderful Cat? If not, I'm going to tell it to you to-night."

Dick Whittington

And His

Wonderful Cat.



A long, long time ago there lived in England a little country lad, Dick Whittington by name. Now Dick's father was a poor man, a farm-laborer, working early and late in the fields that his family might be able to live on even the simplest fare. Sometimes there was very little of this, and at last

Dick made up his mind to go to London and win a fortune for the whole family. There, so he had heard, the streets were paved with gold, and any one might become rich for the asking.

So one night, when every one else was fast asleep in his bed, Dick tied his Sunday clothes together in a bundle and ran away on the wide high-road that led to London-Town. Many a weary mile he walked ; and, when he was very hungry, and it seemed as if his tired feet could not take another step, he cheered himself up by thinking of

those streets of gold. At last he came to London, and what was his disappointment to see only rough cobble-stones, looking just like those in the market-square near his own home. As he was wandering up and down, footsore and not knowing where to go, he caught sight of a little golden-haired girl. It was the only gold he had seen since he came to London. She stared from the window above at the little ragged fellow, and then, as if she suddenly thought that he might be hungry, she ran down and begged the porter to let Dick in.

Now this little girl was Alice Fitzgerald, the daughter of a rich merchant, his only child, and petted and loved by all who knew her. Even the cook, crabbed and cross to every one else, could deny her nothing; and because she asked him so prettily to feed the hungry boy, he took Dick in, gave him some supper, and, the next day, made him his scullion.

Dick worked harder than he had ever worked in all his life before. He never saw Alice except when she went out to walk or ride, for the kitchens were a long way from

the parlors above. The cook was cross, the work was dull, and, worst of all, the little, chilly garret in which the boy slept was filled with mice and rats. These worried him so, running over him at night, waking him from the happy dream that he was at home again, that he spent his last penny for a cat which a ragged urchin was carrying through the streets. Soon the mice and the rats ceased to trouble him, and life seemed easier after all.

Master Fitzgerald, the merchant in whose kitchens Dick worked, was a kind-hearted man, and

whenever he sent out a ship laden with his goods, he let his servants add some venture of their own, too, upon which they could make a profit. Soon after puss had driven away all the rats and the mice in her little master's garret, the merchant called together his household, and asked each one what they would send with his fine new outward-bound ship. Some brought one thing, some another, but Dick Whittington had only his cat to send. All the servants laughed at him, and the cook called him a little fool for put-



SOME BROUGHT ONE THING, SOME ANOTHER, BUT DICK WHITTINGTON HAD ONLY HIS CAT TO SEND. — *Page 194.*

ting so silly a thing on his master's vessel. But the merchant said that if Dick wished to sell the cat it should go, and pussy was carefully put on board the ship. After she was gone how Dick did miss her! He had never realized how fond he was of her until she was so far away that he could not call her back; and the rats and the mice, as if they knew that there was no cat lying in wait for them, ran back into the garret again. At last Dick grew so discouraged that he packed his clothes in a little

bundle and stole out of the house softly one All Hallow's Eve to run back to his home. There the skies were blue, and the people kind, and even if the streets were not paved with gold, all the woods and fields were yellow with Autumn.

But, as he walked quickly along the road that led to the open country, the great Bells of Bow Church began to ring, and the sound came to Dick Whittington's ears like a voice, for it called, "Turn, turn again, Whittington, thrice Lord Mayor of London!"

The little boy listened, and said to himself, "Perhaps there's good luck yet in store for me!" and once more the Bells of Bow pealed out, "Turn, turn again, Whittington, thrice Lord Mayor of London."

So back to his garret and his work went Dick, resolved to stay a while longer at least, and give the Bow Bells' prophecy a chance to come true. The cook was still cross, the work was as hard as ever, and, as the mice and rats gnawed and gnawed, Dick missed his furry friend very much.

But he kept on steadily working, and, by and by, his patience was rewarded. The ship that had sailed so long before with his little venture on board, returned, and the captain told a marvellous tale.

A favorable wind had brought the vessel quickly to the coast of Barbary, and there the sailors went ashore, carrying with them some bales of merchandise to sell to the Sultan, who was so much pleased with the wonderful things that he bought them all, and bade the captain and his officers

dine at the palace. They went, but, no sooner were they seated at a long table spread with magnificent gold and silver dishes, and everything good to eat and drink, than swarms of rats and mice ran out of the walls, and devoured all the banquet. The captain, vexed to lose his dinner so, sent the cabin-boy for the cat which had been left on board the vessel, and, as soon as she came to the palace-door, and saw the mice and rats, she sprang from the boy's arms and chased them all away, just as she had done in

Dick's attic in far-off London. Then the Sultan of Barbary begged to buy this wonderful creature, and offered the captain three hundred thousand pounds for her. So pussy was sold, and a great fortune came in her stead to the little scullion.

And Dick Whittington was worthy of his good-luck, for he sent for all his family to come to London and live like lords; he even gave presents to the servants who had laughed at him and his cat.

His master, the wealthy mer-

chant, made him a partner in his ships and ventures; his fortune yearly increased, and when he had grown to be a young man, he married Alice Fitzgerald, and, last of all, he was knighted by the king, became Sir Richard Whittington, and was thrice Lord Mayor of London, as the Bow Bells had long, long ago chimed in his ears.

“And the best of it all is,” added Impty, with a wide, red yawn, “that Sir Richard never forgot what had brought him his good-

fortune when he was only poor little Dick Whittington; for, in all his statues and pictures, there is a little cat curled down in one corner, in memory of his own puss."

"How I wish I could see one of them," said Dolly, earnestly. "I do love people to remember things."

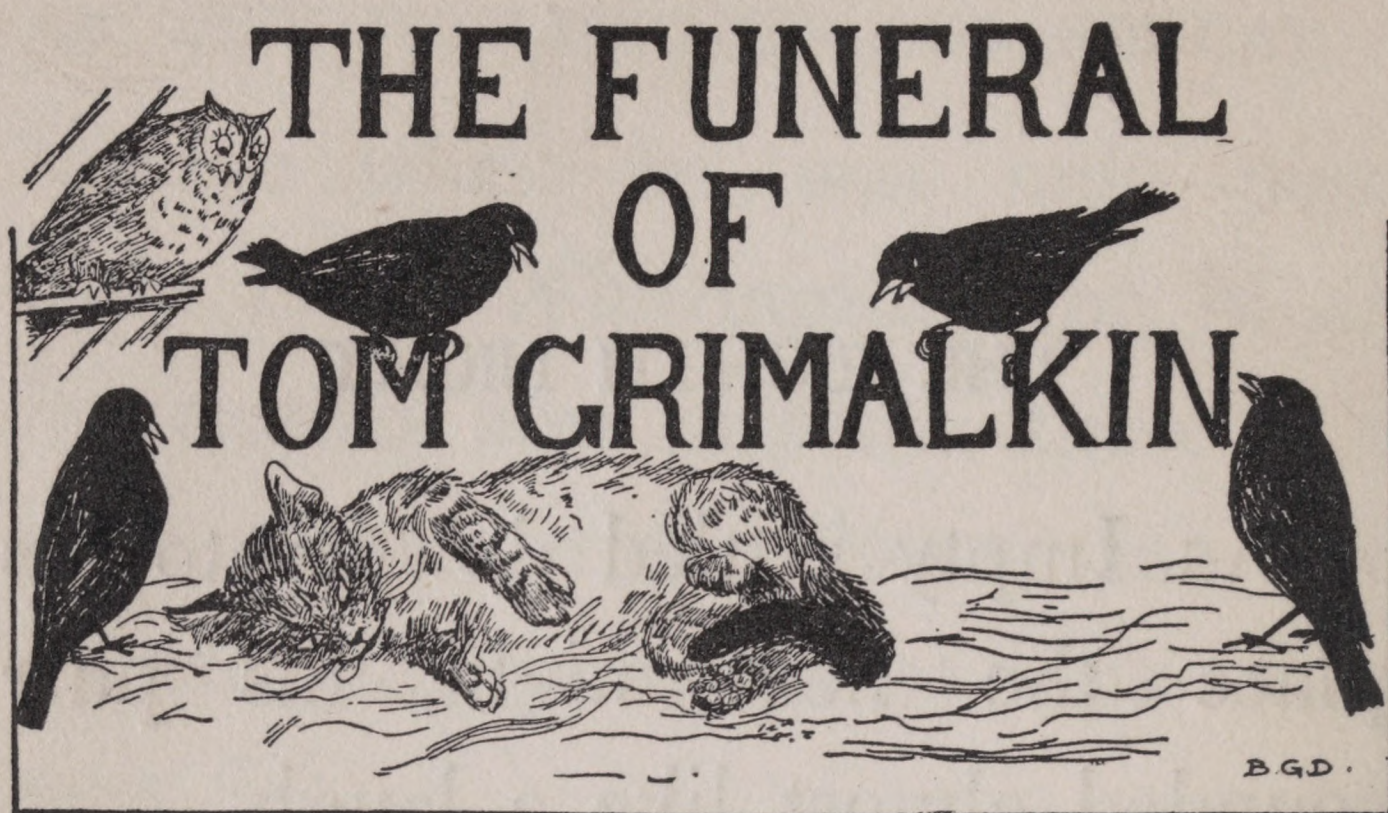
"My grandfather, the King of the Cats, has lots in his palace in Cat-Land. Now, if I could only take you with me — but I can't; it's no use wishing, so good night!"

THE EIGHTH NIGHT

As Impty settled down into his place the next night, his purr sounded almost like a laugh.

“Why, Kitty, what *are* you laughing at?” Dolly asked, for the black kitten was usually a sober little person.

“I was just thinking of a prank my grandfather played in his young days, long, long before he ever thought of being the King of the Cats. If you like, I’ll tell it to you.”



There were once four crows that sat in an ash-tree near an old farm-house. It wasn't long before the owl that lived hard by looked out of his window under the eaves of the loft, and said to them : —

“Good day to you.”

“Good day,” answered the crows.

“Have you any spare time?” asked the owl. “Then I can put you in the way of earning an honest penny.”

“Indeed, we’d like to,” said the four, for the snow was lying old and thick over the whole country, and there wasn’t much to be earned.

“My good comrade, Tom Grimalkin, is dead,” said the owl. “Now, I was thinking you might carry him to his grave. When my old friend was alive, he often used to say to me: ‘Jan Owl,’ he would say, ‘you must give me a

decent burial. A respectable life deserves a respectable funeral,' he used to say, for he was a clever cat. Now, look here! You four have good black coats on, and are honest people — ”

“Come along, then,” said the crows, and crept in through the owl-hole after him, one by one.

Now it was pretty dark in the loft, and the thatched roof was low, but they could see Tom Grimalkin where he lay. He was stretched at full length in the hay, without a move in him. The owl took up his post at his



“ HAVE YOU ANY SPARE TIME ? ” ASKED THE OWL. — *Page 205.*

friend's head, and the crows hopped along, all askew, just as they do in windy weather among the young wheat.

“Many's the mouse we've caught in this loft together, Tom,” said the owl. “We've always been good friends, and many's the spree we've had with one another. But that's all past and gone now. Oh, Tom! Tom, old fellow! How you'd rejoice, and what a spring you'd make, if you were only alive, and I said to you, ‘Tom, four stupid black crows are standing round you this minute!’”

Then up sprang the Tom-Cat, and there was a crow-hunt, the like of which you've never seen.

“Didn't I tell you that owls were more like cats than birds? Why, even that silly song that your uncle sings sometimes, about the owl and the pussy-cat that went to sea in a pea-green boat, and lived on honey, says so. I don't think that any self-respecting cat would eat honey, but the rest of it's true enough. This isn't getting on with my next story, though, and directly I'm through I've got to go to Cat-

Land. There's to be a grand ball at the Palace to-night, and I'm to open it with my cousin, the Princess Miaoulina. You never heard, did you, about the way my grandfather happened to learn that he was King of the Cats? Well, then, I'll tell it to you."

The King Of The Cats



A number of years ago, a gentleman, who was travelling through the eastern part of Germany, lost his way at nightfall, and at last found himself wandering through a large, dense forest. He walked his horse slowly for some hours among the trees, and finally, as he was getting very cold and tired, he thought he saw a

light about a quarter of a mile away. He turned his steps toward it, for he hoped to find some peasant-cottage where he could pass the night, but, when he came nearer, he saw that the light was streaming through the windows of a ruined church. Looking over the sill of one of them, he saw a number of cats gathered round a small grave, into which four of them, crying bitterly, were lowering a little coffin with a crown and Grimalkin the Fifteenth engraved upon it. Instead of stopping to ask the way, the traveller jumped

on his horse, and rode off, fortunately finding the right path at last. His friends had been expecting him for several hours, and, after they had given him a good dinner, and made him as comfortable as they could, they asked him why he was so late.

“Well,” said the man, “I lost my way, and wandered for some hours without knowing where I was, and finally I did strike the right path by some great good-luck. But, while I was lost, I saw the strangest sight I have ever seen in my life!”

“What was it?” asked his hosts, eagerly.

“Why,” the traveller began, “I saw more cats than I ever beheld in all my life before; every one sad and crying, as a coffin, with a crown and Grimalkin the Fifteenth marked upon it, was being lowered into the ground.”

He had got no farther in his story than that, when the large black cat who had seemed to be asleep in front of the fire, leaped up and cried: “What! Grimalkin the Fifteenth dead! Then I’m the King of the Cats!” and spring-

ing up the chimney, he disappeared, and was never seen again!

“The reason he was never seen again,” Impty explained, “was because he went straight to Cat-Land, and people can’t go there, you know. That black cat was my grandfather, and he’d never hoped to be King so soon. But, you see, Grimalkin the Fifteenth lost all his nine lives at once, and so my grandfather succeeded to the throne immediately. Some day, perhaps, I’ll be King of the Cats, and if I ever am, I’ll make a new law

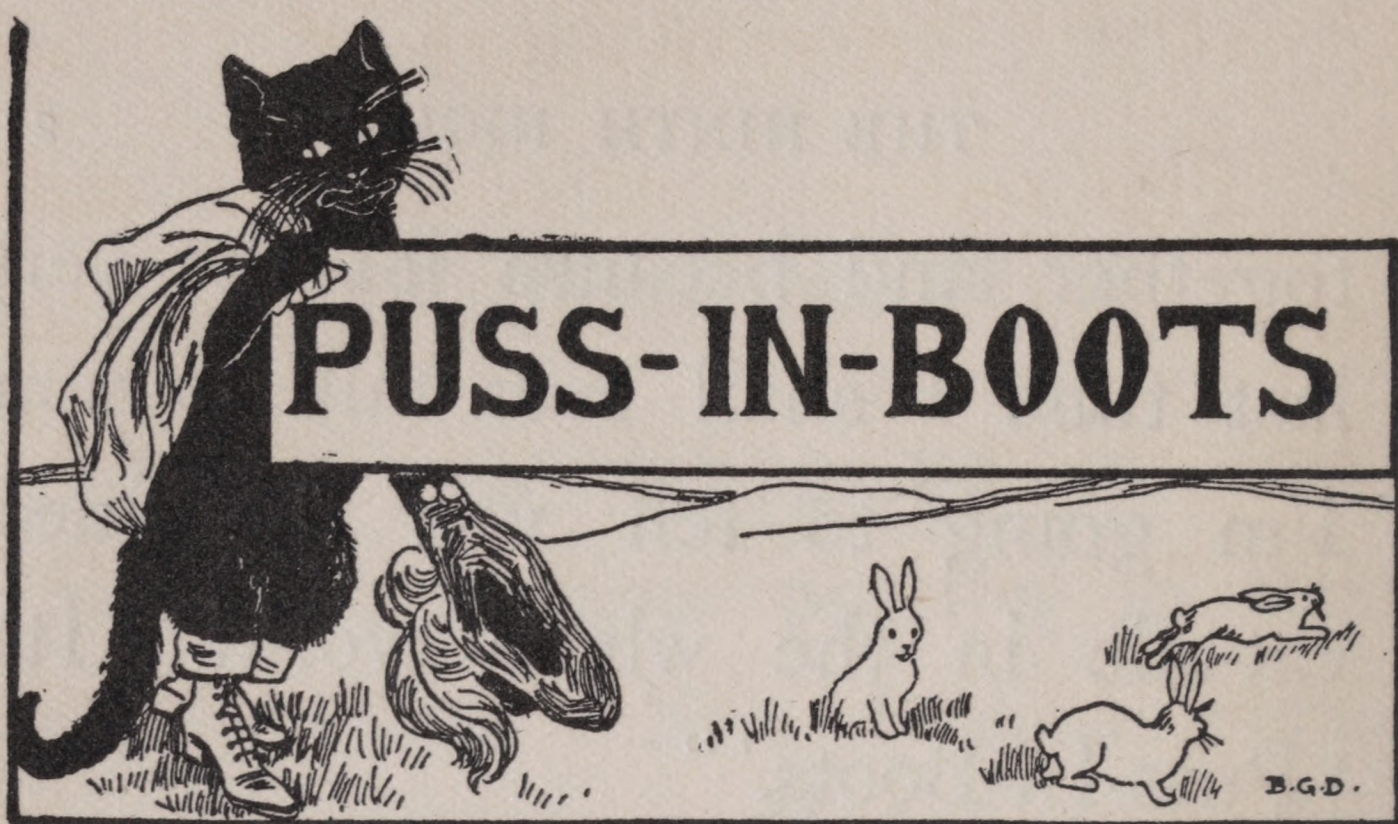
so that you can come to Cat-Land just as you are without changing your shape. Wouldn't that be nice? Good night!"

THE NINTH NIGHT

DOLLY was sitting up in bed when Impty came purring in the next evening. She looked very happy, and she called out gayly to the black kitten: "Oh, Impty! Mother is coming home to-morrow! Miss Jane told me so when she was undressing me."

"I know," answered Impty, curling up comfortably. "The cook was talking about it to Eliza when I was eating my supper in the kitchen. Yes, this is our last night

together, and because it's the very last time I shall ever talk to you, I'm going to tell you the finest cat-tale in the whole world. It's 'Puss-In-Boots.' ”



Once upon a time, long, long ago, in a little country village, there lived a miller and his three sons. He was poor, but he had been able to bring them up respectably, and let them live well enough; though, when he died, his sons found that all he had left them was his mill, his donkey, and his cat.

The oldest son took the mill, the second the donkey, and for the youngest there was left only the pet cat. He was sad indeed when he thought of his inheritance. "What shall I live on now?" he asked himself. "My brothers can go into partnership, and so always earn their living; but when I have eaten my cat, and made myself a muff out of his fur, all that will be left for me is beggary."

While he was thus thinking aloud, the cat came and rubbed up against his legs, purring, and then, to his great surprise, spoke.

“Master,” said Puss, “you haven’t fared so badly as you seem to think. Just have a pair of boots made for me, and get me a sack, and you’ll see fine things!”

The young man hardly knew whether to believe he was awake or asleep. He had never even heard of a cat talking before, but he remembered how clever Puss had always been about catching mice and rats, hiding in the grain and playing dead; and he thought it would do no harm to try what luck his cat would bring him.

So a fine pair of high, yellow



“MASTER,” SAID PUSS. “YOU HAVEN’T FARED SO BADLY AS
YOU SEEM TO THINK.” — *Page 220.*

leather boots was made for the cat, and when Puss had slipped them on, and slung the sack over his shoulder, his master began to have faith in his good-fortune at once.

The cat hurried straight to the warren, where hundreds of rabbits were nibbling grass and clover leaves, and lying down, he opened his sack wide and scattered bran at its mouth. Soon, a silly little rabbit, who knew nothing of tricks and traps, came and entered the sack the better to eat the bran. Quick as a flash Puss drew the strings and killed him without mercy.

Very proud of his prey, he went to the palace of the King, where all the court wondered at seeing a booted cat who could talk. He was shown at once into the throne room, and there, after he had made a low bow, he laid the rabbit at the King's feet, saying, "Here, Sire, is a present from my master, the Marquis of Carabas," for so he had chosen to call the miller's son. The King was very much pleased. "Thank the Marquis, my good fellow," he said, "for sending me such fine game, and here's a piece of gold for you."

Soon after, Puss caught a brace of partridges, and these, too, he carried to the palace. The King was as gracious as before; again he thanked the Marquis, and gave the cat a handsome present. So things went on; from time to time Puss carried game to the King, who always showed him the greatest favor. At last, one day, when the cat had learned that the King and his daughter, the loveliest princess in the whole world, were to drive through their village that afternoon, he ran to his master, and cried: "Quick! Quick! Do

as I tell you, and your fortune is made forever. Take off your clothes, jump into the river, and leave the rest to me." So saying, he took the young man's workaday clothes and hid them under a large rock. Then, as he heard the rumble of chariot wheels on the high road, he began to cry at the top of his voice: "Help! Help! My master, the Marquis of Carabas, is drowning!"

The King, hearing these shouts, popped his head out of the coach window, and seeing the cat who had so many times brought him

presents of game, he commanded his guards to go to the rescue of the Marquis.

“Alas, your Majesty!” cried Puss, “my master’s clothes have been stolen. While he was bathing, robbers came and carried them away, and although I cried, ‘Stop, thief! Stop, thief!’ I could not prevent them from doing this wicked deed. And now he cannot appear before your Majesty.”

“I will send the groom of my wardrobe for one of my finest suits,” said the King; and when the suit was brought, and the

Marquis of Carabas had put it on, every one marvelled to see how handsome he was. The King invited him to get into the coach and drive with them, and, as for his daughter, the pretty Princess, she fell head over heels in love with him.

All this time Puss had been busy, too. He ran quickly ahead of the coach, and, stopping at a fine field, he cried aloud to the peasants who were mowing it: "Good people! If you do not tell the King, when he rides by, that this field belongs to the Mar-

quis of Carabas, I will chop you into mince-meat!"

The peasants were very much frightened at this threat, and, when the King passed by, and asked them who owned the field, they cried with one voice, "It belongs to the Marquis of Carabas."

Puss, who was keeping ahead of the coach, had already come to the next field, a rich meadow which the laborers were reaping. "Good people," he said to them, "when the King rides by, if you do not tell him that this meadow

belongs to the Marquis of Carabas, I will make mince-meat of you!"

Terrified, the peasants promised, and when the King asked them whose meadow they were reaping, they answered as one man, "Sire, it belongs to the Marquis of Carabas."

"You have some very fine property, Marquis," said the King, pleased to find the young man as wealthy as he was handsome. And the Marquis seemed to grow richer, for Puss had stopped at each field, and the peasants declared that all the land there-

abouts belonged to the Marquis of Carabas.

At last Puss stopped before the drawbridge of a mighty castle owned by the richest and most powerful ogre in the whole country-side. The cat begged that the warder would announce him to the Ogre as one who had heard so much of his magnificence that he could not pass by without seeing it. The Ogre, who was very vain, was pleased by this compliment, and received Puss with the greatest kindness. After a while, the cat said : “ They tell me that you

can change yourself into any shape you please ; that, in a moment, you can become a lion or a tiger, or any tremendous thing you wish to be."

"So I can," said the Ogre, "and just to show you, I'll turn into a lion." In the wink of an eye there he was, roaring away, and poor Puss was so frightened that he ran up to the top of the house, slipping at each step, for his fine, shiny boots were never made to climb roofs.

"Come down," cried the Ogre, changing back into his real shape. "I won't hurt you ! Come down !"

Very much scared, Puss clambered down, and, as soon as his voice came back to him, he said, "They say, too,—but this I cannot believe,—that you can take the shape of the tiniest animal, a mouse, for instance."

"Of course I can," said the Ogre, proudly. "Just watch me." He at once became a little mouse scampering over the floor, and Puss, like a flash, sprang on him and ate him up!

By this time the coach had drawn up to the gate-ways of the castle, and Puss, seeing it stop,

ran to throw open the doors, crying: "Welcome, your Majesty! Welcome to the castle of the Marquis of Carabas!"

"Is this yours also, my dear Marquis," cried the King. "What splendid battlements, and what a noble gate-way! Come, let us enter, and see if the interior is as fine, too."

As he spoke, he walked into the castle, and the Marquis gave his hand to the pretty Princess, and led her in.

Puss flung wide the doors of the banqueting-hall and showed a long

table covered with a fine repast, for the Ogre had invited friends to dinner that day, and this feast was prepared for them.

The King, the Marquis, and the pretty Princess ate it in their stead; and at the close his Majesty said, in great good humor, to the young man, "It all depends upon you, Marquis, whether or not you're my son-in-law."

The Marquis, who was in love with the Princess quite as much as she was with him, gladly consented, and that very evening the wedding was celebrated.

So the poor miller's son became the heir of a mighty king, and, as for Puss, who had brought him all this good-fortune, he became a great lord, and caught rats and mice only for his own amusement.

The last Kitty-Cat Tale was finished.

“Now, good-by, little Mistress; go to sleep,” purred Impty, as he rubbed up against Dolly's arm. “I can never, never talk to you again this way, for once, only, does our King permit a cat to talk to a mortal. But, sometimes, when

you are petting me, please remember the stories I used to tell you. Now, I'm going to curl up on your pillow, just because it's the last time. How surprised Miss Jane will be when she sees me to-morrow morning! But it won't make any difference, for we've had our nights, nine of them just like a cat's lives; and I don't mind if she shuts me out now. Good-by! I'm going to Cat-Land again. They're having a wedding there to-night."

"Couldn't I really ever go to Cat-Land? If you were king,

couldn't I?" begged Dolly, wistfully. "I'd truly be good, truly, Impty. And how would I get there?"

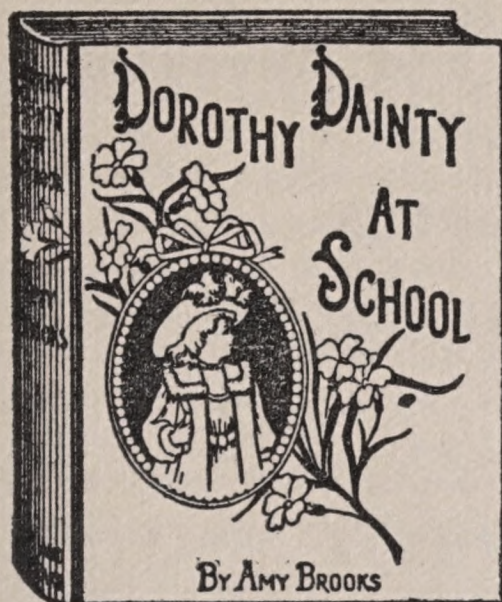
"Why," the black kitten answered, "Cat-Land lies East of the Sun and West of the Moon, and the road runs all along the edge of Wonder-World. But it doesn't take me any time to go because I'm one of the Royal Family. I just close my eyes, and whisk my tail nine times, and I'm there. But I promise, by the whiskers and ears of his Majesty, the King of the Cats, that I'll

take you there if ever I get the chance." He held out his paw solemnly, and Dolly shook it just as gravely. "Now, mind! It's a bargain," he said, snuggling down beside her.

"All right! Good-by!" answered the little girl, sleepily, and when the moon looked in soon after, Impty was off in his dreams to Cat-Land, and Dolly had gone to the Land of Nod.

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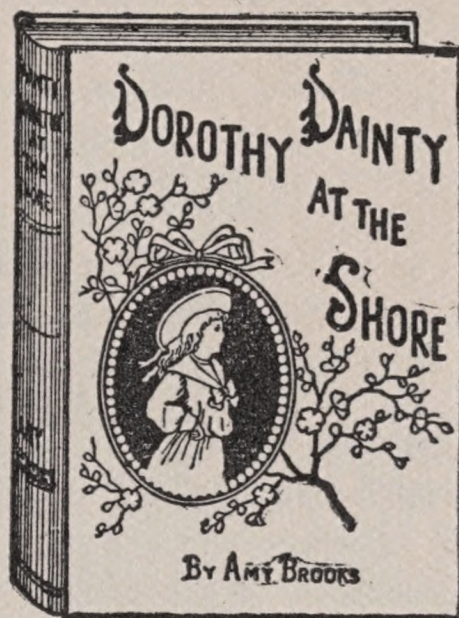
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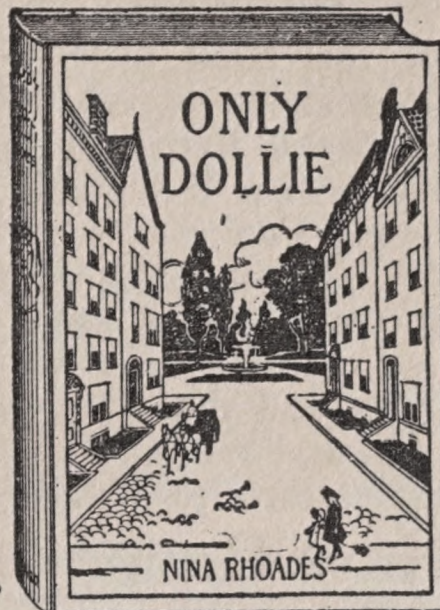
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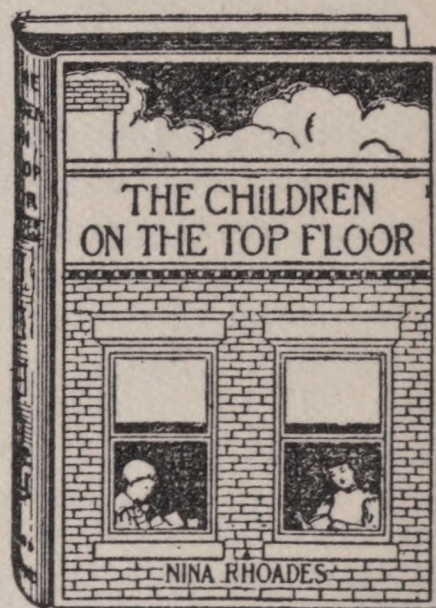
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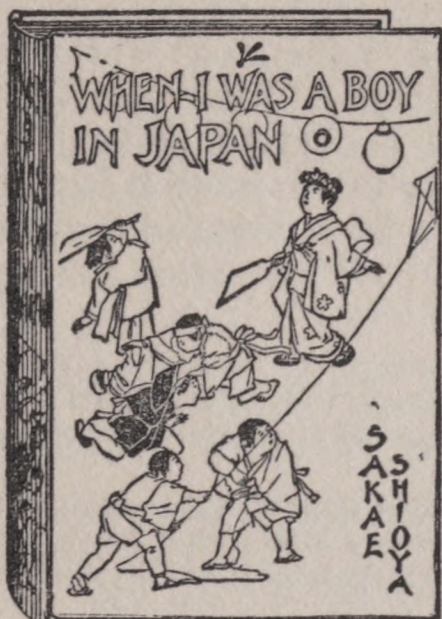
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